

RELIGIOUS TRENDS IN ENGLISH POETRY

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VOLUME II: 1740-1780

RELIGIOUS SENTIMENTALISM
IN THE AGE OF JOHNSON



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TO THE MEMORY OF MY DAUGHTER

Hoxie Mary Fairchild

PREFACE

IN MAY, 1939, WAS PUBLISHED THE FIRST VOLUME¹ OF A SERIES OF STUDIES IN which I hope to trace the course of religious thought and feeling as expressed in English poetry from the eighteenth century to our own times. Although my progress has been somewhat retarded by the necessity of adjusting myself to a new academic position, I now offer a second volume which carries the subject to about 1780. As I try to show in my opening chapter, the beginning of a new "period" at 1740 is not merely arbitrary, and considering my plans for the future it seems justifiable to stop for the present at the threshold of the Romantic Period. The subject of course is continuous, but the years 1740-1780 constitute a significant phase of its history.

For a more detailed statement of the aims and methods of these studies I must refer the reader to the Preface of Volume I. Like its predecessor, this book arrives at its conclusions through a study of the poems—in most cases the complete poems—of a large number of individual poets. This procedure has at times been wearisome to me, and it may be even more so to my readers, but I adhere to it as a protection against loose and hazy generalizations. If the eighteenth-century foundation of my historical structure is not composed of many separate bricks firmly cemented together, the upper stories will collapse. My ideas on this subject have been formed by asking each of a long line of poets, "What do you say about religion?" I should like to set forth not only my conclusions but the whole process from which they have arisen, hoping that fellow-students who are willing to share this experience will then be prepared to move onward with freer steps in later volumes of the series.

In a review of Volume I a scholar whose opinion I greatly value objected that I had paid too little attention to the general religious and intellectual background of the poets until I reached my concluding chapter. My defense is that I wished to write not a history of religious thought but a history of religious thought as it appears in the work of English poets. Most readers,

¹ *Religious Trends in English Poetry*, Vol. I 1700-1740, Protestantism and the Cult of Sentiment (New York, Columbia University Press, 1939)

I believed, would have sufficient knowledge of the general movement of eighteenth-century intellect for my purposes. If not, there were plenty of philosophical and theological studies to which they might be referred. In the present volume, however, I have tried to meet this criticism halfway. Although my study remains sharply focused upon the poets, it provides somewhat more background than Volume I and does more to guide the reader from step to step by means of the introductory and concluding portions of chapters. Since interpretative discussion is distributed more evenly through the text, the book is less uncompromisingly inductive in structure though not in fundamental method. The opening chapter provides a bridge between the two volumes and describes the temper of the 1740-1780 period as a whole. Chapter IV discusses the Evangelical Movement. These are not original contributions to knowledge, but they may be of some use to the reader.

In order that these changes might not swell the book to proportions which in wartime would be unbearable even to my long-suffering publishers, I have omitted a number of minor poets whom I had originally planned to include and have also used somewhat fewer and briefer quotations than before—economies which will please those who thought Volume I a little exhausting in its exhaustiveness. But harder students will still find a very copious selection of big and little poets who are allowed to bear witness to their faith, or lack of faith, in their own words.

Two critics of my first volume suggested that in the case of writers like Swift and Addison, who expressed their religious ideas more fully and interestingly in prose than in verse, an interpretation based solely on their poetry was misleadingly incomplete. This objection is perfectly valid, hence I have excluded from the present volume the verse of such prosemen as Johnson, Goldsmith, Smollett, and Graves. An exception has been made for Horace Walpole, who was needed to exemplify the versifying aristocrat.

The foregoing paragraphs will indicate that I have tried to profit from criticism and that I am grateful for it. Human nature being what it is, however, I am even more grateful for the approval with which my first volume was received by most reviewers. It is, of course, difficult to maintain complete objectivity either in writing or in criticizing a book which concerns religion. In general my thesis has been more cordially accepted by critics who have no religion at all or a religion similar to mine than by critics whose own religion illustrates some phase of the trend from Protestantism to sentimentalism. But this result was quite predictable, and on the whole I feel

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that students of both religious and literary history have encouraged me to continue in the path I have chosen

Almost all the materials for this book were at hand by the time Volume I appeared. This is not true of the next volume, which will therefore require six or seven years to complete. Omitting minor figures entirely, it will be devoted to what might be called "spiritual biographies" of the major romantic poets

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RELIGIOUS TRENDS
IN ENGLISH POETRY

M Chapter I

THE DECAY OF RATIONALISM

IN 1740 WALPOLE IS TOTTERING, AND TWO YEARS LATER HE WILL FALL. ENGLAND, already fighting to avenge Jenkins's ear against Spain, has undertaken the more formidable task of defending Maria Theresa against Frederick. The log-jam of "quieta non movere," broken at last, is drifting into swift waters of European war, colonial war, revolution. Internal affairs will reflect these agitations. From a political muddle in which "Ins" and "Outs" are more significant labels than "Whigs" and "Tories," new parties will gradually take form and new issues will arise.

Probably no social historian would assert that either the Industrial or even the Agricultural Revolution had "begun" by 1740. But the problems which those movements were to make so acute were already felt, and the attempt to solve them by evangelical or sentimental techniques would soon begin. John Kay's flying shuttle dates from 1733. Four years later, and sixty-one years before Malthus, Richard Savage is worrying about technological unemployment, overpopulation, immigration.¹ The gap between wealth and poverty is widening. Under the goad of social misery, the mob will soon become the proletariat.

Though in 1740 England is still primarily an agricultural nation, the merchant has begun to threaten the dominance of the squire. The anonymous dialogue *Agriculture and Commerce* was published in 1765,² but the issues which it debates were not unfamiliar twenty-five years earlier. Agriculture, the elder brother, declares that Commerce has no moral or religious standards. "You sell your very soul for pelf." But Commerce—his argument will be recognized by readers of the first volume—retorts that intolerance is bad for business.

Must I, whose range is every region,
Go meddle with the Pope's religion?

¹ See *Religious Trends in English Poetry*, I, 459.

² It was written, according to the title page, in the previous autumn.

DECAY OF RATIONALISM

His Holiness may name his dish,
While he keeps Lent, I'll find the fish

With the great Soldan and his minions,
I quarrel not about opinions,
I think my thoughts, I raise no dust,
Enough to me, the men are just

Why should he not deal with slave traders, provided they pay their bills?

If cruel owners void of grace,
Torturers of the human race,
The downward road to hell incline,
That's their look-out, and none of mine
Not over scrupulous at complexion,
With heathen men I hold connection,
Commercial faith my greatest care
You needs must own, all this is fair

When Agriculture accuses Commerce of arousing a taste for luxury which
corrupts "simple nature," the younger brother answers

Go, starve on philosophic plan,
With Rousseau in the Valaisan
Go, crack your nuts, on turnep dine,
And let your drink be Adam's wine
If still you think it not enough,
Tear off your cloaths, and live in buff,

I'll frank you to the western shore,
To the Yahoos of Labrador

But when Commerce vaguely suggests that his brother is responsible for
the recently concluded war, Agriculture is crushing in rebuttal

Your war, you mean, it was not mine,
I dealt not with the Bourbon line
Had Monsieur broke into my fold?
The Don purloin'd my goods or gold?
Your restless temper, secret sins,
Your cod-fish, and your badger skins,
Your western undefin'd frontiers,
Brought an old house about my ears
Go, fight, said you, we must have wars
We fought beneath propitious stars

You still exclaim'd, we must fight on,
Till peace was given us from the Throne
Then first you bawl in clamorous fret,
"Good Lord, we're over ears in debt"

How familiar all this sounds in our own times! For our present purposes, however, the point is that the strifes to which Agriculture alludes had begun by 1740

Not only for political and social history is this date a useful one. The death of Pope in 1744 will mark the close of a literary era. Edward Young is about to publish a poem of much significance for us. He to be sure is already a veteran, but important younger poets will soon begin their careers, and they will find interesting religious trends to which they may respond. John Wesley's second birth occurred in 1738. The Deistic Controversy is ebbing, but the tide of Methodism and Evangelicalism has begun to rise.

But although one may plead sufficient justification for beginning the second volume of this series at the year 1740, it is, of course, impossible to impose fixed chronological divisions upon such a subject as ours. We have merely sat down to rest at a likely spot in the road. As we rise to trudge onward, we had better glance back over the country already traversed. The glance will be very brief, for I must not bore those who have been my fellow-travelers on the first stage of the journey.

Volume I studied religious thought and feeling as exhibited in the poems of 128 poets, together with a considerable amount of miscellaneous poetic material. The writers were divided into two main groups: those who flourished chiefly between 1700 and 1720, and those who flourished chiefly between 1720 and 1740. A comparison of the two groups suggested the following conclusions: During the first forty years of the century there is a decline, both qualitative and quantitative, of poetry expressing intelligent antireligious ideas, of poetry entirely indifferent to religion, of poetry mingling political passions with some degree of religious feeling, and of poetry embodying an emotional and imaginative response to orthodox Christianity. On the other hand, there is a marked growth of the cult of sentiment—sometimes frankly deistic, more often expressed in terms of latitudinarian Christianity. In short, irreligion goes down, orthodox Christianity goes down; sentimentalism comes up.

"Protestantism and the Cult of Sentiment" is the subtitle of Volume I. The relations between these two varieties of religion are suggested throughout the book and are discussed at some length in the concluding chapter.

Although during the 1700-1720 period the poetry of Christianity preserves many of those "romantic" seventeenth-century tendencies through which the sentimental spirit is later to find expression, there remain essential differences between sentimentalism and Christianity. The core of sentimentalism is "the idea that feeling is good because man is good." To quote further from the first volume: "By the end of the 1720-1740 period, sentimentalism has become not only more abundant but more self-conscious than during the 1700-1720 period. Even a feeler must think, if only to validate his feelings. The good heart must be established as part of a good universe, and the universes of Christian Rationalism and of merely destructive deism are insufficiently exciting for the purpose. Hence in Dyer, Hill, Mallet, Savage, Baker, Nugent, I. H. Browne, and Henry Brooke—to name only the clearest examples—the basic urge of sentimentalism is formulated into something like a creed. A more or less Platonic Divine Spirit has thought the universe into being by an act of creative imagination. 'Nature' is the universe as permeated by this benign spirit. Since the deity is revealed only in nature and in that most godlike part of nature, the human breast, 'Nature' and 'God' are almost synonymous terms, but a careful sentimentalist prefers to speak of 'Nature *and* Nature's God.' The creation is a delightful spectacle not merely because it is an ordered whole nor because it is so richly variegated, but because its unity proliferates into diversity and its diversity reveals a unity. Nature was not made for man, for every creature has the right to seek its own ends and to live as abundantly as its position in the scale of being permits. Nevertheless man occupies a distinguished position in the universal harmony. His bosom teems with warmly benign impulses akin to those of his Maker. His conduct is regulated by an intuitive spiritual taste, a virtuoso's ability to appreciate the cosmic masterpiece, a creative urge not unlike that which moved the Almighty Poet to write 'the world's great poem.' The sense of inward divinity may be satisfied either by retired contemplation of the works of Nature's God or by expressing in the active life one's personal share of the divine benevolence.

"Although not all men of feeling would subscribe to everything in the foregoing paragraph, this is the theoretical norm against which variants and imperfect cases can be measured. The creed may be espoused by a man who calls himself a Christian, but it is plainly a tender-minded form of deism—a religion in itself, quite independent of Christianity and essentially hostile to the traditional faith. Christianity preaches the redemption of sinful man through Incarnate God, but since the sentimentalist stands in no need of

redemption the entire groundwork of Christianity is cut away, and the Saviour becomes irrelevant. Christianity therefore either disappears or survives merely as a body of unreal traditional rhetoric some parts of which may be applied to sentimental uses.

"Sentimentalism, to be sure, includes something faintly analogous to the Christian doctrine of the Fall. In some inexplicable way, man has forgotten the pure lessons of reason and nature, and often plays a less gracious part in the universal harmony than do the flowers and the birds. The sightless chasm between theory and reality doubtless accounts for much of the melancholy which shadows the sentimentalist's optimism. But the return to reason, nature, harmony, and universal benevolence is to be accomplished by man without any prayer to be lifted up upon the rock that is higher than he. There is no positive disharmony between us and our Creator—only a lack of will to assert harmony. The trouble is not that we are sinners, but that we are insufficiently aware of our natural sinlessness."³

Yet although sentimentalism is not only un-Christian but implicitly or explicitly anti-Christian, it is historically related to certain elements of seventeenth-century Protestantism. The materials of Volume I substantiate the statement that sentimentalism is essentially a middle-class trend. The political tradition of the 1700–1740 bourgeois is that of Whiggish liberalism, and his religious tradition is ultimately that of Puritanism. Hence, to speak pseudoscientifically, factors favorable to sentimentalism in poetry are membership in the middle class or sympathy with the ideals of that class, Whiggery in politics, and puritan background in religion. Between 1700 and 1740 a relatively strict Puritanism sometimes exists side by side with a quite advanced form of sentimentalism. In most cases, however, the sentimental poets represent, in a blurred, diffused, softened form, a continuation of the puritan mood and temper rather than of the puritan creed.

Once the cult of feeling has moved a considerable distance from its seventeenth-century sources, the sentimentalist may spurn the grimness of the Calvinist. Such gestures should not, however, lead us to regard eighteenth-century sentimentalism as a swing-of-the-pendulum reaction against seventeenth-century Calvinism. "The beliefs of the Calvinist were of course grim and threatening, as we have seen, he bequeathed his sombre soul-searching to the eighteenth century in the form of a painful-pleasing emotional indulgence. Nevertheless, the Calvinist was much less gloomy than the modern historian would be if *he* were a Calvinist. . . . on the

³ I, 485–86

whole, [he] made less of the thought that anybody might be damned than of the thought that anybody—even he—might be saved. If he experienced conversion—and he generally managed to do so—he had practically conclusive proof that he was one of the elect. In that case his struggle against sin was merely a healthful exercise, a game in which he was sure to be victorious. In the eyes of God he was whiter than snow, a seventeenth-century *schöne Seele*. He knew the truth, and the truth had made him free. Hence he could enjoy both the thrilling dramatic atmosphere of predestination and ‘the glorious liberty of the children of God.’ At the slight cost of a theoretical assertion of his utter worthlessness, he might obtain that great desire of the human heart, the sense of being strong, wise, and good.

“Under the rationalistic influences of the Enlightenment the Calvinist’s formal beliefs decay more rapidly than his inward religious emotions. He loses most of his creed, but he retains, in a blurred and softened form, the emotions which his creed had both reflected and fostered. The God above him becomes more shadowy than the God within him, until at last he is left with the basic attitude of sentimentalism—a sense of inward virtue and freedom which must somehow find corroboration in the nature of the universe. Just enough brimstone remains to tinge his optimism with melancholy, just enough other-worldliness to make him shrink at times from the civilization which he has built. It is fitting that Jean-Jacques should have been reared in Geneva.”⁴

In Volume I, then, I try to demonstrate, through an examination of many individual cases, that between 1700 and 1740 religious feeling as expressed in poetry moves from Low Church Anglicanism and Nonconformity to latitudinarianism and from latitudinarianism to sentimentalism. The concluding chapter suggests certain reasons for the emergence of sentimentalism from the bosom of Protestantism, but anyone curious about these rash speculations must seek them in their original setting. The historical facts, at least, are reasonably clear, and having reminded ourselves of them we may prepare to move onward.

The present volume, like the former, will drag its slow length along in a chiefly inductive manner, examining poets one by one. An important feature of the new period, however, had better be discussed in advance—the decay of rationalism.

In this respect, of course, the 1740–1780 period merely represents the accel-

⁴I, 545–46

eration of a process which had been at work ever since the beginning of the century. From the Renaissance onward, indeed, faith in that a priori, deductive, geometrical type of reason which is cultivated by pure rationalism had constantly been undermined by the spirit of scepticism, and in the first half of the eighteenth century the strength of reason and the weakness of reason were almost equally popular themes. The sceptic was not, however, the only species of antirationalistic termite. The Enlightenment regarded reason as a universal faculty lodged within the human breast, a sort of "Inner Light" which enabled all men easily to comprehend the few simple axiomatic truths which constituted the groundwork of nature. Hence the line between reason and feeling was extremely thin, and for men of emotional rather than cerebral temper there was nothing to prevent rationalism from collapsing into sentimentalism. Furthermore, these two foes of rationalism easily effect an alliance. When the sceptic has lost faith in reason, he is likely to cultivate faith in feeling. Conversely, the sentimentalist with no firm intellectual or spiritual anchorage is likely to drift into scepticism.

The process most characteristic of the eighteenth century, however, is a successive breaking down of rationalism into empiricism and of empiricism into sentimentalism. Dangerous as such generalizations always are, one is tempted to say that the Englishman is not sufficiently fond of abstract thinking to maintain a pure rationalism. John Locke clearly exemplifies the fate of rationalism in England, where the true is the workable. Edmund Burke is loyal to the national tradition when he defies the logic-choppers of the French Revolution. "The pretended rights of these theorists are all extremes, and in proportion as they are metaphysically true, they are morally and politically false." From 1688 onward the rise of the middle class, with its utilitarian interests, greatly furthered the transformation of metaphysical truth into empirical truth.

But empiricism is a highly unstable intellectual position, for the man who says that he will shun theory and live by solid facts is really saying that he will open his heart to every breeze of feeling which may chance to blow. Empiricism may turn hard, or it may turn soft, but frequently it becomes that curious mixture of hardness and softness which one observes in such men as Richardson. The eighteenth-century bourgeois is not merely utilitarian, he is also sentimental. He preserves clear traces of those deeply emotional hopes and fears which moved his Puritan forebears. He in turn, of course, is the ancestor of the modern business man, who exhibits similar streaks of hardness and softness. Mr. Henry Ford's antique-hunting is the

attempt of one side of his character to preserve the vestiges of that culture which another side of his character has done so much to destroy. The eighteenth century is rich in such inconsistencies. They indicate that if rationalism breaks down into empiricism, empiricism no less easily breaks down into sentimentalism.

This process is far advanced by the date at which our present study begins. Reason staggers into the 1740-1780 period already severely damaged by scepticism, empiricism, and sentimentalism. But she is now to receive even heavier blows from the same enemies. Hume, the greatest philosopher of the age, will deny the possibility of philosophy, asking, "What peculiar privilege has this little agitation of the brain, which we call thought, that we must thus make it the model of the universe?"⁵ This archsceptic also represents, with Gibbon and Robertson, the growth of an all-embracing historical outlook which implies a thoroughly antirationalistic conception of truth as manifold, relative, and instrumental.

Rationalism will not disappear beneath these onslaughts. Men like Richard Price will transmit the old spirit of geometry from Clarke and Wollaston to Godwin, and as the French Revolution approaches the trend will be strengthened by the influence of the *philosophes*. But whenever this rationalism emerges from the closet into the world, it is likely to take either an empirical or a sentimental turn. With such partial exceptions, the reason to which the age continues to profess loyalty is seldom the reason of the old rationalism. For most tastes Hume will seem too harsh and negative. He will be answered, however, not by a revival of rationalism but by appeals to common sense, to solid matter, to the intuitions of the feeling heart, and at last to the transcendental faculty.

In the 1740-1780 period, the decay of rationalism is an important factor in the history of religious thought. The decline in theological speculation is marked. Although deistic views continue to find their way into print up to the very end of the century, the Deistic Controversy proper is generally thought to have ceased by about 1750. But the older notion that the deists were crushed by their orthodox opponents has given place to the view of such authorities as McGiffert. "The victory was won, so far as there was any victory at all, over both the orthodox apologists and the Deists by the sceptics.

That religious faith and devotion still survived was due, not to the apologists, but to altogether different influences, of which the great evangelical revival was the most important."⁶

⁵ Quoted by Leslie Stephen, *History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century*, I, 322.

⁶ A. C. McGiffert, *Protestant Thought before Kant* p. 243.

Although the appeal to a standard of abstract deductive reason continued to be cultivated by both parties, empirical arguments based upon supposed historical or scientific fact became increasingly common as the controversy developed. By 1720 or so the deists had largely abandoned their original attempt to reconstruct the pure, rational, and universal religion of nature. In their loftier moments they still asserted their belief in that religion (and usually in Jesus as its supreme embodiment), but their chief efforts were devoted to attacks on prophecy, miracle, and other aspects of Christian "priestcraft." Accepting this shift from a battleground of theory to one of fact, the orthodox "evidence writers" launched their somewhat circular counterattack.

The eighteenth century's love of ironic satire sometimes prompted the attempt to discredit Christianity by arguing, with pretended approval, that it could not be judged by the ordinary criteria of reason. A famous example of the trick is Henry Dodwell's *Christianity Not Founded on Argument* (1742). But this device loses its point as deism itself loses its confidence in reason. "I am the better pleased with the method of reasoning here delivered," sneers Hume in the essay *Of Miracles*, "as I think it may serve to confound those dangerous friends or disguised enemies to the *Christian Religion*, who have undertaken to defend it by the principles of human reason. Our most holy religion is founded on *Faith*, not on reason; and it is a sure method of exposing it to put it to such a trial as it is, by no means, fitted to endure." But this undoubtedly malicious argument is uttered by a man who denies the validity of reason without as well as within the religious sphere. He exposes the fallacy of proving miracles through a revelation which depends on miracles for its authority, but it is equally fallacious to deny the power of reason to establish the uniformity of nature and then to attack miracles as irrational violations of unvarying natural law.

Meanwhile the orthodox apologists themselves grow increasingly willing to admit that Christianity is indeed "not founded on argument" and that its claims are derived from higher sources than either rationalism or empiricism can provide. Even before the beginning of our period this tendency is occasionally manifest. The philosophy of Berkeley was, of course, antirationalistic. In 1731 William Law attacks the sufficiency of reason in *The Case of Reason, or Natural Religion, Fairly and Fully Stated*. "On the destructive side," says Mossner, this work looks forward to "the universal scepticism of Hume, and on the constructive, [to] Methodism or the renewal of enthusiasm foreshadowing the later idealistic theology of Coleridge."⁷

⁷ E. C. Mossner, *Bishop Butler and the Age of Reason*, p. 127.

Professor Mossner's study, *Bishop Butler and the Age of Reason*, has reminded us that scepticism, when used as a means of defending Christianity against the sceptic, is a double-edged weapon. In *Christianity as Old as the Creation*, Tindal, like many other deists, had contrasted the certitude of natural religion with the dubiety of revelation. Butler's *Analogy* strikes back at Tindal by arguing that natural religion is no less baffling to human reason than revealed religion. If even natural religion is not free from apparent irrationality, it is useless to indict revealed religion on the same charge. But is one to infer that natural and revealed religion are equally true, or that they are equally false? One inference would be as logical as the other. Benn, who is no champion of Revelation, perhaps goes too far in asserting that the *Analogy* "is considered to be largely responsible for the more complete unbelief which took the place of deism among the highest intellects after its publication."⁸ Nevertheless there are qualities in Butler's work which predict Warburton's puzzled lament: "There is an epidemic madness among us. Today we burn with the feverish heat of superstition, tomorrow we stand fixed and frozen in Atheism. Expect to hear that the churches are all crowded next Friday, and that on Saturday they buy up Hume's new Essays."⁹ Not, of course, that Butler is overtly attacking reason. On the contrary, he aims to present a geometrically demonstrative proof of God's existence. But pure rationalism is a less important factor in his thought than a mixture of empiricism and sentimentalism. Ultimately he relies upon a pragmatic doctrine of probability supported by a form of "Pascal's wager," and upon the very subjective witness of conscience—Shaftesbury's moral sense reinterpreted as the will of God in man.

After Butler, abstract theological speculation grows increasingly unfashionable. The old piling up of teleological evidence of course continues to its climax in Paley. More popular, however, is an apologetics which combines ethical utilitarianism with an appeal to a common-sense and unenthusiastic kind of inward witness. Soame Jenyns's *View of the Internal Evidence of the Christian Religion* (1776) represents this tendency.¹⁰ He argues that since Revelation implies something more than rational, it cannot be proved by abstract logic or even by external evidence. Without denying the truth of miracles and prophecies, he asserts in his Preface that "they must now depend for much of their credibility on the truth of that religion, whose credibility they were at first intended to support." He has been converted from

⁸ A. W. Benn, *History of English Rationalism in the Nineteenth Century*, I, 37.

⁹ Quoted by A. W. Evans, *Warburton and the Warburtonians*, p. 214.

¹⁰ The book went through ten editions and was translated into several foreign languages.

deism by the excellence of Christian ethics Christianity's benign influence on heart and mind provides inward conviction of its truth

Within the general framework of empirico-sentimental apologetics there are variations running all the way from an almost wholly objective utilitarianism to an almost complete reliance on subjective feeling The inwardly "experimental" faith of Methodism represents the latter extreme John Wesley tells a university congregation that truly saving faith may be distinguished from "the faith of a devil" by the fact that "it is not barely a speculative, rational thing, a cold, lifeless assent, a train of ideas in the head, but also a disposition of the heart"²¹ Although Soame Jenyns would have repudiated with horror any imputation of Methodism, both he and Wesley are champions of "internal evidence" and enemies of rationalism Once recognize the validity of feeling as a guide to spiritual truth, and the old distinction between "reasonable" and "enthusiastic" religion blurs Religion becomes a matter of relative degrees of heat, and reason is no longer strong enough to impose a check on one's personal tastes Some like it hot, some like it cold

But if we are to proceed in our study this bewildering flux must be submitted to some sort of classification In the 1740-1780 period there is a good deal of complete indifference to religion Large numbers of men behave not as if they believed or disbelieved in God but as if they were simply unaware of the question of His existence There is also a considerable amount of anti-Christian scepticism—sometimes mockingly impious, sometimes masked in more edifying deistic formulas There is a prudential, pragmatic religion of good conduct more or less mechanically expressing itself in Christian terms There is the more inward and enthusiastic Christianity of Methodism and its less ardent brother, Evangelicalism And finally there is the pervasive cult of sentimentalism, which may be regarded both as a kind of religion in itself and as an influence which mingles with other religious viewpoints of the day The poets who are now to be examined group themselves in accordance with this perhaps oversimplified but workable division of trends

²¹ *A Sermon preached at St Mary's, Oxford, before the University, on 11 June, 1738*

Chapter II

WITS AND SCOFFERS

THE AUTHORITIES ARE ALMOST UNANIMOUS IN DESCRIBING THE MID-EIGHTEENTH century as a bad time for Christianity "If," says Clark, "we take the beginning of Whitefield's preaching in 1736 as marking roughly the commencement of the Evangelical Revival and the rekindling of religion in England, we may take the period from 1714 to the year named as marking the darkness before the dawn. It was the time when the religious decline of which we have previously spoken ran swiftly to its worst, when the general religious condition which had for a time been 'neither cold nor hot' settled into frozenness, and when all the Churches, like the Ephesian Church of ancient days, got furthest from their 'first love'."¹ If by 1740 the sun had raised its head above the horizon, it had not very noticeably scattered the darkness, and to the very end of the century there remained large areas unilluminated by its rays. Near the beginning of our period Warburton declared that he had lived to see "what lawgivers have always seemed to dread as the certain prognostic of public ruin, that fatal crisis when religion hath lost its hold on the minds of a people."² The bishop, of course, was thinking of Christianity, whose grip on his own mind was not exactly viselike. He did not take into account that cult of sentiment which had risen so rapidly since 1720.

Even as regards the traditional faith, Warburton's picture is perhaps too sombre. A stodgy Christianity is still firmly entrenched among the bourgeois, and among the lower classes the rapid drift toward heathenism will shortly be checked by the Methodist preachers. It is the aristocratic circles—though even here the darkness is not pitch black—which chiefly substantiate the reports of eighteenth-century infidelity. Among persons of quality not merely indifference but cynical mockery is almost the general rule during the reign of George II. When we break through the elegant surface of that civilization which looks so charming to modern escapists, we plunge into a cesspool.

¹ H. W. Clark, *History of English Nonconformity*, II, 175.

² Quoted in A. W. Evans, *Warburton and the Warburtonians*, p. 42.

As an authority on specific facts Lord John Hervey is hardly to be trusted, but he faithfully represents the temper of the court. He himself abandoned the creed of his pious father to become a destructive deist, and he is probably the author of a pamphlet defending Mandeville against Berkeley's *Alciphron*.³ His *Memoirs* frequently allude to ecclesiastical politics and the personal ambitions of clerics like Hoadly and Sherlock but suggest no glimmer of spiritual life. The Eve at whose ear he squatted, the philosophic Queen Caroline, had dabbled her way through Newtonianism and the Arianism of Samuel Clarke into deism. In her last illness the king sobbed with grief when he saw her condition growing desperate. Gazing up at him from her pillow, she urged him to take another wife after her death. "While in the midst of this passion, wiping his eyes, and sobbing between every word, with much ado he got out this answer '*Non, j'aurais des maîtresses*' To which the Queen gave no other reply than '*Ah! mon Dieu! cela n'empêche pas*'"⁴ As her last moment drew near some members of the crowd which surrounded her bed thought it improper that she should die without the ministrations of Dr. Potter, the Archbishop of Canterbury. Hence Walpole said quite openly to Princess Emily "Pray, madam, let this farce be played: the Archbishop will act it very well. You may bid him be as short as you will. It will do the Queen no hurt, no more than any good, and it will satisfy all the wise and good fools, who will call us all atheists if we don't pretend to be as great fools as they are."⁵ To Hervey, the only shocking feature of this speech is its indiscreetness.

At the rival court of Prince Frederick, conditions were somewhat different. The Prince of Wales was a weakling, a dilettante, a rake, and an unbeliever. The "Hell-Fire Club" of which he was the presiding genius looks forward to the elaborate blasphemies of Medmenham Abbey. But since his libertinism was rationalized in terms of affection for liberty, and since he was not without literary taste, his entourage included, along with sensual toadies like Bubb Dodington, persons of character and talent. The ideals of Prince Fred were mostly tinsel, but at least they glittered more brightly than the country-squire animalism of Robert Walpole. Nevertheless no one would describe the religious tone of the prince's court as particularly elevated. Bolingbroke, it will be remembered, was the guiding star of all his political and moral being.

³ J. W. Croker's "Biographical Notice" prefixed to his edition of Hervey's *Memoirs of the Reign of George the Second*, I, xxvi.

⁴ Hervey, *Memoirs*, II, 514.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 527.

The higher aristocracy occasionally toyed with verse but seldom stooped to the vulgarity of print.⁶ With rare exceptions their elegant amusements did not appear even in miscellanies in sufficient quantities to permit substantial discussion of individual figures. Less illustrious persons of quality were less averse to the indignity of publication. There were also many writers who, although hardly "gentlemen" in the technical sense, cultivated the aristocratic tradition either as a true expression of their personal tastes or as a badge of the gentility to which they aspired.

Horace Walpole (1717-1797), needless to say, belonged to the innermost circle of wit and fashion. The strange duality of his nature does not concern us, for his verses contain no trace of the Gothic spookery with which he attempted to relieve his ennui in *The Castle of Otranto* and *The Mysterious Mother*. As a poet he is completely unromantic.

At Cambridge, however, the example and encouragement of Gray and West gave the young Walpole more earnest poetic ambitions than he cherished in his cynical maturity. Very Whiggish and very Protestant is a poem of 1738, *Verses in Memory of King Henry the Sixth, Founder of King's College, Cambridge*. In this descriptive-reflective piece on the famous chapel, he assumes that Henry would be delighted to see his edifice purged of popish corruptions:

Here mild Devotion bends her pious knee,
Calm and unruffled as a summer sea,
Avoids each wild enthusiastic tone,
Nor borrows utterance from a tongue unknown
O Henry! from thy lucid orb regard
How purer hands thy pious cares reward,
Now Heav'n illuminates thy godlike mind,
From Superstition's papal gloom refin'd
Behold thy Sons with that religion blest
Which thou wou'dst own and Caroline profess'd

Queen Caroline had died in the preceding year. To invoke her latitudinarian spirit in King's College Chapel is one of the most astonishing feats of imagination which the eighteenth century can boast.

Such ideas were drawn by the Cambridge student from the teachings of the Reverend Conyers Middleton, a very cool Christian but a very hot Whig. "That fiery controversialist," says Mr. W. S. Lewis, "had imbued his pupil with a fierce resentment of crowned heads, papal and secular—an easy task,

⁶ Chesterfield's verses are glanced at in *Religious Trends in English Poetry*, I, 267-68.

for Walpole brought to his Whiggish environment a nature congenitally in revolt against authority”⁷ The Middleton influence is even stronger in *An Epistle from Florence to Thomas Ashton, Esq., Tutor to the Earl of Plymouth* (1740) To Ashton, Walpole recommends the study of history as an intellectual discipline for the young earl and thence sets off on a little history of England He is very severe against priestcraft, kingcraft, and the doctrine of divine right Papal Rome is a land of “Unlearn’d, unchaste, uncharitable Saints,” of “fat Celibacy” and “sacred Sloth,” of “holy Drones” who “plunder by a vow of Poverty” and who wring money from the credulous devotee by means of “A bone, a mouldy morsel, or a nail” The nun pines away in her effort to suppress “What Nature dictates, and what God commands” unless “some lusty Priest” gets her with child In that case the babe is destroyed either in the womb or at birth Walpole’s modesty forbids him to describe those “grosser acts” which defile the monastic life

From all this England has won her freedom, but not without a struggle Charles I is to be pitied His “acts of lawless pow’r” should be blamed on “lustful Henrietta’s Romish shade” and on Laud, “more Romish still than her” Charles II was immoral and dishonorable

Free to buffoons, to ministers deny’d,
He liv’d an atheist, and a bigot dy’d

Walpole’s youthful devotion to Protestantism did not, to put it very mildly, illumine his maturer years He remained a half-whimsical republican until the French Revolution scared him into conservatism, but the religious viewpoint which had at first been a corollary of his love of liberty disappeared entirely The verses really characteristic of him are toilet-table trifles in which he mentions religion very seldom, and then only with a sneer or a titter He observes, for example, how appropriate it is that Thomas Secker, the new Archbishop of Canterbury, should now be compelled to sign himself “Thomas *Cant*”⁸ The same theme appears in a scrap of verse included in a letter of April 2, 1750, to Horace Mann

When Whitfield preaches, and when Whiston writes,
All cry, that madness dictates either’s flights
When Sherlock writes, or canting Secker preaches,
All think good sense inspires what either teaches
Why, when all four for the same gospel fight,

⁷ *Horace Walpole’s Fugitive Verses*, p. 18

⁸ *On the New Archbishop of Canterbury*

Should two be crazy, two be in the right?
 Plain is the reason—every son of Eve
 Thinks the two madmen, what they teach, believe ”

Sherlock and Secker are hypocrites, but at least they have retained their sanity.

A perfect little piece of dainty mockery is the *Epitaph on Two Piping-Bullfinches of Lady Ossory's*, with its delicious burlesque of the Judgment Day convention in funeral poetry

All flesh is grass, and so are feathers too
 Finches must die, as well as I and you

But when the last shrill flageolet shall sound,
 And raise all dickybirds from holy ground,
 His little corpse again its wings shall plume,
 And sing eternally the self-same tune,
 From everlasting night to everlasting noon

In some poets of the age, Queen Caroline's calm, unruffled, unenthusiastic devotion softens into sentimentalism, but in wits like Horace Walpole it leads to a politely smiling scepticism

Although Dr John Armstrong (1709-1779) courted the society of his gayer patients, his cumbersome middle-classical⁹ verses do not achieve the quality of butterfly wit. This poet might well have been included in Volume I, for he began to write as early as 1725, he has been reserved for treatment here because his only important poem, *The Art of Preserving Health*, appeared in 1744. He was the son of a minister of the Kirk of Scotland, but he departed rather far from parental teachings. After a brief period of sentimentalism, during which he consorted with Thomson, Mallet, Hill, Young, and Savage, he began to acquire a reputation for lazy libertinism. As physician to the Wilkes family, whose Nonconformist piety equalled that of his own father, he was one of the earliest London friends of John Wilkes. It was he who introduced the young man to the wits and rakes of the town.¹⁰ His prose *Sketches, or Essays on Various Subjects* (1758) are thought to owe some of their literary merits and moral defects to Wilkes's assistance. But as a Scot he took umbrage at the *North Briton*, and Wilkes in turn was irritated

⁹ See "Middle-classicism" in the Index of Topics of Vol. I, where this pun is used to describe the sort of neoclassical poetry which has been influenced by the temper of the rising middle class

¹⁰ G. F. Nobbe, *The North Briton*, p. 7

by his old mentor's acceptance of a government post.¹¹ There was a quarrel, and Armstrong was attacked by Churchill. Thenceforth Armstrong became more and more spleenful and lost the friends who had once regarded him as kindly and convivial. I have no evidence as to his actual beliefs, but it is safe to say, as Chaucer of an earlier physician, that "his study was but litel on the Bible." He was a Freemason¹² and probably a deist of the negative type.

Though the poems of this Scot seldom reveal the less savory side of his character, they contain only chemical traces of religious feeling. Except for the juvenile *Imitations of Shakespeare*, they are almost equally devoid of preromantic symptoms. He conventionally praises the country, chiefly as a source of health, and likes the "artful wildness" type of gardening. But it was as a medical authority rather than as a lover of Spenser that he supplied the four concluding stanzas of Canto I of Thomson's *Castle of Indolence*. In his epistle on *Taste* he derides preromantic literary fads, saying, for example, that

thanks to Heav'n and Addison's good grace,
Now ev'ry fop is charm'd with Chevy Chase

He is remembered only for his ability to versify, with frigid ingenuity, some of the technicalities of his profession, a gift which has earned him a place among the many imitators of the *Georgics*. This talent is combined with a slightly pornographic erudition in *The Oeconomy of Love*, which, says Chalmers, "has been very properly excluded from every collection of poetry."¹³ Though not explicitly irreligious, it is not to be recommended for Lenten reading.

Armstrong's didactic chef-d'œuvre, *The Art of Preserving Health* (1744), contains a few pious passages which impress one as perfunctory devices of elevation. He recognizes the existence of something called "the soul," but his concern with it is chiefly professional.

Meanwhile, this heavenly particle pervades
The mortal elements, in every nerve
It thrills with pleasure, or grows mad with pain
And, in its secret conclave, as it feels
The body's woes and joys, this ruling power
Wields at its will the dull material world,
And is the body's health or malady

¹¹ In 1760 Armstrong was appointed physician to the army in Germany.

¹² He and his close friend Thomson were initiated on September 13, 1736, with Richard Savage officiating as master. See G. C. Macaulay, *James Thomson*, p. 45.

¹³ *The Works of the English Poets*, XVI, 516.

In general he makes much of the relation between mental and bodily states

For Armstrong, healthy minds and bodies are the result of vigorous practical activity. He disapproves of pensive retirement, advising the bereaved and the lovelorn

Court not the luxury of tender thought,
Nor deem it impious to forget those pains
That hurt the living, nought avail the dead
Go, soft enthusiast! quit the cypress groves,
Nor to the rivulet's lonely moanings tune
Your sad complaint. Go, seek the bustling crowd,
Lay schemes for wealth, or power, or fame, the wish
Of nobler minds, and push them night and day

More important for us are the religious implications of a passage in the second book of the poem

This huge rotundity we tread grows old,
And all the worlds that roll around the Sun,
The Sun himself, shall die, and ancient Night
Again involve the desolate abyss
'Till the Great FATHER thro' the lifeless gloom
Extend his arm to light another world,
And bid new planets roll by other laws
For through the regions of unbounded space,
Where unconfin'd Omnipotence has room,
Being, in various systems, fluctuates still
Between creation and abhorr'd decay
It ever did, perhaps and ever will
New worlds are still emerging from the deep,
The old descending, in their turns to rise

The plurality of worlds, ceaseless flux of death and birth in the world of matter, creation not an event occurring once and for all in 4004 B.C., but a ceaseless divine activity, cosmic historicity and relativism—these are conceptions not easily reconciled with traditional Christianity. Probably Armstrong desires no such reconciliation. His "Great Father" is the god of deism, a more complex and empirical kind of deism than that which once regarded nature as "clear, unchanged, and universal."

Armstrong's chief poems subsequent to 1744 are a cluster of epistles in a more or less Popean, witty-didactic style. In *Taste* (1753), he sneers at the Goths and refers in a footnote to Gregory VI, "whose pious zeal in the cause of barbarous ignorance and priestly tyranny exerted itself in demolishing, to the utmost of his power, all the remains of heathen genius." The same poem

ascribes the occasional dullness of Lucretius to the weightiness of his subject, but expresses admiration for him at his best

Sometimes a meteor, gorgeous, rapid, bright,
He streams athwart the philosophic night

In the eighteenth century approval of *De Natura Rerum* is usually a symptom of freethinking

The epistle *Of Benevolence* is surprisingly lacking in sentimental unction. One finds, however, a suggestion of Shaftesbury's aesthetico-ethical theory. There is a taste in conduct as there is a taste in painting or scenery

But of all taste the noblest and the best,
The first enjoyment of the generous breast,
Is to behold in man's obnoxious state
Scenes of content, and happy turns of fate
Fair views of Nature, shining works of art,
Amuse the fancy, but these touch the heart

Greatest of all, however, are such men as the generous friend addressed in this epistle, who not merely enjoy the spectacle of happiness but who create examples of it for themselves and others to behold—like those who, not content with admiring a fair natural prospect, engage in the construction of beautiful gardens. This thought does not appear elsewhere in Armstrong's poems, and one imagines that he seized upon it as a device for expressing his gratitude.¹⁴ Ordinarily he is no more a benevolist than he is a Christian.

Our next poet will be remembered by Johnsonians as a tiny star in the constellation of the Great Bear. Boswell relates that Samuel Derrick (1724–1769)¹⁵ “was my first tutor in the ways of London, and showed me the town in all its variety of departments, both literary and sportive.”¹⁶ By introducing Boswell to the bookseller Davies, Derrick made possible the biographer's first interview with Johnson. The Doctor did not admire Derrick's work, but regarded the man with a kind of amused affection.

For us only the work remains. In *A Collection of Original Poems* (1755), we see a flat, dull, silly little fribble who deems himself the gayest and most

¹⁴ “This little piece was addressed to a worthy gentleman, as an expression of gratitude for his kind endeavours to do the author a great piece of service” (Armstrong's note.)

¹⁵ First a linen draper's apprentice, then an unsuccessful actor, then a man of letters, and finally successor to Beau Nash as Master of Ceremonies at Bath. He performed similar functions at Tunbridge Wells.

¹⁶ *Life of Samuel Johnson*, I, 527.

charming of songsters²⁷ His stock in trade consists of little occasionals like *To a Lady crying for the Death of her Lapdog*, "love odes," anacreontics, numerous cantatas, short classical translations and imitations, fables, epigrams, humorous epistles in octosyllabic couplets—the Matthew Prior tradition gone to seed His magnum opus is *The Art of Making Kisses*, a translation of the *Basia* of Johannes Secundus He has dipped into Skelton, Donne, the *Pentameron*, and the Latin epigrams of Buchanan and Owen, but he makes only trivial use of his gleanings A couplet which he translates from Buchanan seems perfectly applicable to himself

What wonder Doletus should write witless strains,
When, alas! the poor man has *no guts in his brains*

Despite the prominence of the anacreontic element, Derrick's verses are harmless enough Of religion, naturally, there is hardly a trace Two psalm-paraphrases, according to his "Advertisement," were written when he was "not quite fourteen" A poem entitled *Conscience* observes that " 'Tis innocence alone true peace can know " The wealthy Lysander, lacking innocence, is miserable, but the breast of the simple peasant is carefree, for

In his lone humble cot the treasure lies,
Which neither wealth can buy, nor pomp supplies
Grant then, thou pow'r divine, whose single nod
Can make the trembling world confess its God,
That guilt my honest heart may never stain,
Nor pungent conscience dart afflicting pain
Turn me, O turn me, from the path impure,
In thee I trust, thy aid alone is sure

Whether Derrick was much troubled by pangs of conscience we do not know "His loose and extravagant life," says that stern moralist Boswell, "kept him always in want,"²⁸ but he seems to have been foolish rather than vicious There may be some truth in an epigram by Francis Gentleman which appears in Derrick's volume

Contradiction we find both in Derrick and Smart,
Which manifests neither can write from the heart,
The latter, which readers may think somewhat odd,

²⁷ The volume is fulsomely dedicated to George Bubb Dodington The author asserts that most of the poems were written before he was twenty, but one suspects him of pushing back his dates in the manner of Pope For reasons no longer comprehensible, Derrick set up for a wit, a compilation called *Derrick's Jest*s was published soon after his death

²⁸ *Life of Samuel Johnson*, I, 528

Tho' devoted to wine, sings the glories of God
 The former lives sober, altho' no divine,
 Yet merrily carols the praises of wine¹⁹

It is at least greatly to his credit that when George Faulkner and other influential persons urged him to take holy orders, he refused on the ground that he was not a clerical sort of person.²⁰ Such exceptional honesty helps us to understand Johnson's gentle words, "I had a kindness for Derrick, and am sorry he is dead."²¹

Forty-six pages of Derrick's *Collection of Original Poems* consist of verses by Ashley Cowper, uncle of the famous poet, whose endeavors to get his nephew a parliamentary clerkship had so disastrous a result.²² Ashley Cowper's poems are a trifle smoother and more formal than Derrick's but are equally trivial and devoid of religious interest. The sole exception is *On Human Life*, where the author, in view of the precariousness of existence, aspires to live constantly prepared for death.

As Master of Ceremonies at Bath, Derrick was doubtless acquainted with that gay trifler, Christopher Anstey (1724-1805). Product of Eton and Cambridge, landed proprietor, and social favorite, Anstey belonged to that privileged class of which Armstrong and Derrick were mere hangers-on. I have neglected a few poems which he dropped into Lady Miller's vase at Batheaston. His rather amusing versified gossip column, *The New Bath Guide* (1766), furnishes all that we need to know about him. Needless to say, it reveals not the faintest tincture of religious feeling. It concerns us only as containing some broadly comic thrusts at the Methodists, who have made of Bath a resort.

Where gaming and grace
 Each other embrace,
 Dissipation and piety meet

¹⁹ *Smart and Derrick: An Epigram Written by Mr G[entleman]*. In the British Museum copy the name is filled in by the eighteenth-century hand which has, with obvious authoritativeness, annotated the whole volume.

²⁰ This fact I owe to Mr W. Hubert Miller, a Columbia graduate student who has written an M.A. essay on Derrick. Mr Miller also informs me that Derrick came of an Irish Catholic family who found it convenient to turn Protestant during the turmoils of the seventeenth century.

²¹ *Life of Samuel Johnson*, I, 446.

²² In Derrick's volume the author is not mentioned by name, but a footnote on p. 206 credits these verses to the "publisher" of *The Norfolk Miscellany*, who is known to be Ashley Cowper. The fact explains why several members of the Cowper family, including young William, subscribed to Derrick's *Collection*.

But since anti-Methodist verse will be discussed in a later chapter, no more need now be said of Anstey except to remind the reader that his father was a clergyman

Thomas Carlyle described the experience of reading the London, 1822, edition of the *Works* of Sir Charles Hanbury Williams (1708-1759) as "swimming in the slop-pails of an extinct generation,"²³ but Horace Walpole regarded him as a model of the social graces, and Burke referred to him as "the polished courtier, the votary of wit and pleasure" Dr Johnson thought him "lively and elegant, though too licentious" and said he had no fame but from boys who drank with him.²⁴

At all events Sir Charles was a well-bred, free-thinking and free-living gentleman, well known in social, literary, and political circles.²⁵ On uncovering his three "slop-pails" we find a few gallant lyrics and light occasional pieces, but chiefly a large mass of short satirical squibs on political affairs and on personal scandals more or less closely related to politics and the life of the court. He is a strong supporter of Sir Robert and a foe of his foes, a close friend of Horace Walpole, Lord Hervey, and Lord Holland. Once Robert Walpole has fallen, he openly shows his scorn of George II. Though not elaborately obscene, he is frequently coarse. He can be amusing but is usually too slipshod and wordy.

Sir Charles almost never alludes to matters of religion. When he does, he makes the familiar libertine assumption that parsons are dull, greedy, self-seeking hypocrites. The following fragmentary simile is characteristic:

So, when one crop sick parson in a doze,
Is reading morning-service through his nose,
Another in the pulpit, straight appears,
Claiming the tir'd-out congregation's ears,
And with a duller sermon ends their pray'rs

He gleefully recounts how Lord Doneraile changed his chapel into a kitchen

Pray'r-books turn'd into platters, nor think it a fable,
And dressers sprung out of the c[o]mm[unio]n table,
Which instead of the usual repast, b[re]ad and wine,
Is stor'd with rich soup, and good English sirloin

²³ Quoted in the *D.N.B.* article, "Williams, Sir Charles Hanbury."

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ His career, however, ended tragically. In 1755 his diplomatic attempts to form a British-Austrian-Russian alliance were so ill received at home that he suffered a nervous breakdown and committed suicide.

The bishop thinks it impious "To cram Christians with pudding instead of the creed," but he is completely appeased by "A haunch piping hot from the *sanctum sanctorum* "

Then again on the walls he bestow'd consecration,
But receiv'd the full right of a free visitation,
Thus 'tis still the lord's house, only varied the treat,
Now there's meat without grace, where was grace without meat ²⁶

All parsons, he assures the Reverend Samuel Hill, hanker for preferment

For when to pray'rs they're summon'd by the bells,
And Hill is seated in his stall at Wells,
To th'altar, at the creed, he turns about,
With eyes uplifted, and with looks devout
When *I believe in God*, he chants aloud,
To act his part, and to deceive the crowd,
To *Fortune*, then, he offers up his pray'r,
Who makes the clergy her peculiar care,
And softly muttering his lips between,
"O goddess, make thy votary a dean" ²⁷

His political views combine with his irreligion in *Old England's Te Deum*

We complain of Thee, O King, we acknowledge Thee to be
an Hanoverian

To Thee all Placemen cry aloud, the House of Lords, and
all the Courtiers therein

To Thee Carteret and Bath continually do cry,
Warlike, warlike, warlike, Captain General of the Armies!
Brunswick and Lunenburgh are full of the brightness of our
coin

The venal company of Peers praise Thee
The goodly fellowship of Ministers praise Thee
The Holy Bench of Bishops throughout the land doth acknowledge Thee

Thine honourable, true and steady Son
Also my Lady Yarmouth, the comforter
Thou art the ever charming Son of the Father
When thou tookest upon Thee to deliver this nation, thou
didst not abhor thy Father's example

²⁶ *New Ballad* On Lord Doneraile's altering his Chapel at the Grove, in Hertfordshire, into a Kitchen

²⁷ *To the Rev Samuel Hill, Canon of Wells, etc , etc*

O King, spare thy people of England
And now squeeze thy people of Hanover

Day by day we sing ballads unto Thee

O King, let thy Mercy lighten our taxes, as our Credit should
be in Thee

Valour be to the Father, common sense to the Son, and a
young bed-fellow to the Countess of Yarmouth, as was not in
the beginning, is not now, nor is ever like to be, world without
end²⁸

A friend of Sir Charles, and a fellow-contributor to that frothily elegant periodical *The World*, was Richard Owen Cambridge (1717-1802)²⁹ He is not, however, to be classified as a gay blade of the town. Most of his long life was that of a country gentleman, and Chesterfield marvelled at the fact that so fine a wit should be a water-drinker.³⁰ His son testifies that from boyhood to the hour of death his father was an unusually devout Christian and Churchman. "When no longer able to partake of the communion at church, he continued to receive it at home, on the festivals and other suitable occasions."³¹

It is a testimony to the power of the aristocratic versifying tradition that the good man's poems contain not so much as a psalm-paraphrase to substantiate this probably accurate report of his piety. Except for *The Scribleriad*, his chief poem, they consist mainly of harmless and amusing but thoroughly unspiritual prattle—Prior with a dash of Anstey.³² Once, indeed, he draws from Voltaire the plan of a little tale which begins

A Fakeer (a religious well known in the East,
Not much like a parson, still less like a priest)
With no canting, no sly jesuitical arts,

²⁸ *On Benevolence: An Epistle to Eumenes*, in Williams's *Works* (London, 1822), I, 1-8, has already been described as a poem of Armstrong's. It is much more characteristic of the Scotch doctor than of Williams. Armstrong's note declares that the poem "was addressed to a worthy gentleman, as an expression of gratitude for his kind endeavours to do the author a great piece of service." If Sir Charles was the "worthy gentleman," as is quite probable, it is easy to see how Armstrong's epistle got mixed up with his papers and was printed in this posthumous edition.

²⁹ He published nothing in the last forty odd years of his life. His best known poem, *The Scribleriad*, appeared in 1751. Besides contributing twenty-one essays to *The World*, he produced a *History of the Rise and Progress of the British Power in India*.

³⁰ Chalmers, XVIII, 229n.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 231.

³² He associates himself with preromanticism only in a five line *Imitation of Shakespeare* and in a longer, allegorical poem in a modification of the Spenserian stanza, *On the Marriage of His Royal Highness Frederic Prince of Wales*.

Field-preaching, hypocrisy, learning or parts,
 By a happy refinement in mortification,
 Grew the oracle, saint, and the pope of his nation
 But what did he do this esteem to acquire?
 Did he torture his head or his bosom with fire?
 Was his neck in a portable pillory cas'd?
 Did he fasten a chain to his leg or his waist?
 No His holiness rose to this sovereign pitch
 By the merit of running long nails in his breech ²⁸

A sensible Hindu rebukes the fakir's fanatical pride in a way which suggests that this pious wit had a good deal of the latitudinarian dislike for priest-craft and enthusiasm

Edward Moore (1712-1757) was the scion of solid nonconforming stock Both of his grandfathers, his father, and the schoolmaster uncle who reared him were dissenting ministers When his linen-draping business failed he despairingly turned to literature and succeeded beyond his hopes His bourgeois tragedy, *The Gamester* (1753), had precisely that Richardsonian combination of realism and sentimentalism which would be expected in a man of his background It was through the good offices of Lord Lyttelton that he entered more refined literary circles from which his modest birth and scanty education might otherwise have barred him Lyttelton's influence gave him the editorship of *The World* when it was begun in 1753 Under the pseudonym of "Adam FitzAdam," Moore himself wrote sixty-one numbers and won a reputation as a good light essayist In this way he was thrown into contact with such talented persons of quality as Chesterfield, Soame Jenyns, Horace Walpole, Lovibond, Williams, and Cambridge

In Moore's poems, on the whole, we see the sprightly Adam FitzAdam rather than the author of *The Gamester* His *Fables for the Female Sex*, separately published in 1744, inculcate sound and sensible morals but are not at all pious In his numerous songs there is sometimes a faint breath of popular lyricism ²⁹ Such phrases as "Nature's God" and "Author of Nature" appear, though very rarely, as vestigial remnants of religious feeling In *The Trial of Selim the Persian* he praises Lyttelton's piety, but chiefly in order to flatter the patron who set such store by his *Observations on the Conversion and Apostleship of St Paul*

With these slight exceptions the Berkshire dissenter has perfectly caught

²⁸ *The Fakeer A Tale* First published in 1756

²⁹ See especially *Song XI*, a sentimental anapaestic spook-ballad

the accent of the town. An experienced reader who knew nothing of his life might easily infer that he was a baronet's son who, after gay years at Eton and Cambridge, had come to London and set up as an elegant amateur of light society verse. Though his contemporaries praised his moral character, his poems are almost always worldly and not infrequently risqué. He has the wit's distaste both for nonconformist zeal and Romanist "superstition." Of a sluttish housekeeper he writes

If bottled beer her thirst assuage,
She feels enthusiastic rage,
And burns with ardor to inherit
The gifts, and workings of the spirit.⁸⁵

The Nun is a bawdy cantata telling how a nun goes to her young confessor to learn how to die (in the religious sense of *bona mors*) but ends by "dying" in his arms. Another cantata, *Solomon*, paraphrases three sections of Canticles in a manner neither religious nor voluptuous, but glibly operatic. His father, who died when Moore was very young, would not have liked it.

Blasphemy is the spice of libertinism. At least as early as 1720 there were three Hell-Fire Clubs in London, one of them led by the notorious Duke of Wharton. They seem to have been an outgrowth of the Mohocks. The members were young men of quality who added to the usual pleasures of the rake the special thrill of thumbing the nose at God.⁸⁶ Somewhat later, a similar organization centered about Prince Frederick. The most famous of all Hell-Fire Clubs, however, was that whose members referred to themselves as "The Monks of Medmenham Abbey." Their president was the accomplished profligate, Sir Francis Dashwood,⁸⁷ their secretary and steward, Paul Whitehead. Lord Sandwich, who kept a baboon as his private chaplain, Thomas Potter, the son of an Archbishop of Canterbury, John Wilkes, Bubb Dodington, Sir William Stanhope, and Sir Thomas Stapleton were also prominent members. We are not sure whether Churchill and Robert Lloyd were actual members or occasional guests of Wilkes. Another visitor was the gay Hall-Stevenson, whose club of "Demoniacs" at Skelton Castle was the Yorkshire equivalent of the Great Marlowe group.

Dashwood's abbey, in admiring emulation of Rabelais's abbey of Thélème, had "Fays-ce que voudras" as its motto, and the Medmenhamites were the

⁸⁵ *Fable XIII*

⁸⁶ R. J. Allen, *The Clubs of Augustan London*, pp. 119-24.

⁸⁷ See Ronald Fuller, *Hell-Fire Francis*, and Louis C. Jones, *The Clubs of the Georgian Rakes*, chaps. v and vi.

fruit of three centuries of loyalty to this precept. Precisely what went on at their revels is hard to say: the truth has been blurred by the pious horror of their rustic neighbors and the exaggerations of their political enemies. There seems to be no doubt that the club was conducted as a more or less systematic parody of a monastery, with "Saint Francis" Dashwood as the abbot. Twelve members formed an inner circle representing the Apostles. The harlots entertained at the abbey were, either regularly or occasionally, costumed as nuns. The initiation ceremony was a sort of Black Mass, and there are reports of other devotions addressed to the Devil, to Bacchus, and to Venus. But all this was done in a spirit of witty drunkenness, not of philosophic diabolism.

Paul Whitehead (1710-1774),⁸⁸ the secretary and steward of these merry monks, is remembered as a thoroughly corrupt but good-natured man. He is almost exclusively a satirist and says little that bears upon our subject. At times, however, we find him attacking ecclesiastical corruptions in the vein which will be used more powerfully by Churchill.

Thus in *Manners* (1738) Whitehead nobly declares that

Bishops and kings may consecrate, 'tis true,
Manners alone claim homage as their due

In vain, behold yon rev'rend turrets rise,
And Sarum's sacred spire salute the skies!
If the lawn'd Levite's earthly vote be sold,
And God's free gift retail'd for Mammon gold

Honour (1747) contains lines in the same tone. The clergy enjoy "Ease without care, and plenty without pains." Yet they look to the king rather than to God as the source of these blessings:

Lost to the stall, in senates still they nod,
And all the monarch steals them from the God,
Thy praises, Brunswick, every breast inspire,
The throne their altar, and the court their choir,
Here earliest incense they devoutly bring,
Here everlasting hallelujahs sing
Thou! only thou! almighty to—translate,
Thou their great golden deity of state⁸⁹

Needless to say, the motivation of these diatribes is not religious but political.

⁸⁸ The son of a London tailor. After a period of apprenticeship to a mercer, he studied law in the Middle Temple and thus became a member of the theatrical set. In 1733 he began his career as an antiministerial satirist and was soon a paid worker for the Prince of Wales's faction. Sir Francis Dashwood was his patron. Toward the end of his life he aroused the angry scorn of Churchill by accepting a government post.

⁸⁹ *An Epistle to Doctor Thomson* (1755) contains a similar passage.

Whitehead bequeathed his heart to the abbot of Medmenham, and the precious relic was deposited in Dashwood's mausoleum with a medley of military and religious rites. Not many of the rakes who attended this ceremony could have refrained from smiling when the surpliced choir chanted

From Earth to Heaven Whitehead's soul is fled
 Refulgent glories beam around his head!
 His Muse, concurring with resounding strings,
 Gives angels words to praise the King of kings⁴⁰

No such sentimental flourishes would have been pleasing to the shade of our next poet, who declares

I have been taught in early youth,
 By an expert Metaphysician,
 That ridicule's the test of truth,
 And only match for superstition⁴¹

Thus does John Hall-Stevenson (1718-1785),⁴² friend of Sterne and Yorkshire imitator of the Medmenhamites, acknowledge his debt to the non-sentimental side of Shaftesbury. He would have us think of him as a foe of religious obscurantism. The anonymous preface of his posthumous *Works* (1795) quotes him as saying "There ought to be a great distinction between obscenity evidently designed to inflame the passions, and a ludicrous liberty which is frequently necessary to shew the true ridicule of hypocritical characters, which can give offence to none but such as are afraid of every thing that has a tendency to unmasking." Writers of Hall-Stevenson's type, being fond of sniping at what they call "hypocrisy," are often regarded as witty champions of religious sincerity. Though cold-blooded hypocrites are extremely rare, there have always been clerics who, subconsciously impelled to protect the vested interests of their caste, have affirmed in public far more than they believed in private, and whose personal conduct has fallen below the standards which they enjoined upon others. Such priests were numerous in the eighteenth century, and assuredly they deserved to be satirized. At least equally numerous, however, were those laymen to whom all religious institutions were hypocritical by definition. Medmenhamites and Demoniacs were not condemning the Pharisee in the spirit of Jesus, they were merely protecting their libertinism by exploiting the familiar fact that not many

⁴⁰ Chalmers, XVI, 204

⁴¹ *The Black Bird* Fable IV of *Makarony Fables*

⁴² Born John Hall, but added the name Stevenson on marrying an heiress. He was famous for his madcap entertainments at Skelton Castle, where he presided over a club of "Demoniacs." On his yearly trips to London he consorted with Wilkes and Horace Walpole. He is of course the "Eugenius" of *Tristram Shandy* and *Sentimental Journey*.

Christians are good Christians Anyone who believes that such writers were forced into impiety by the sins of the Church can believe anything

John Hall-Stevenson is more interested in daubing the Temple with dirt than in removing the stains which any honest man finds there His cynical, smutty, and often amusing verses abound in mockery of sacred things To be sure, he is so seldom serious that one must not take him too seriously Only a very narrow piety would be shocked by the burlesque versions of the stories of Jonah and of Elisha and the bears in *To My Cousin Shandy, On His Coming to Town* A more risqué poem on the advantages of "sweet, reluctant, amorous delay" in the technique of courtship includes a characteristic Biblical allusion

Adam was weary of a single life,
And seeing Eve bashful and nice,
He thought her fitter for a wife,
Than any beast in Paradise

So when a 'squire sees a maiden coy,
He makes a jointure,
And in a fit of joy,
Prefers her to a pointer ⁴⁸

Sterne's noble-souled Eugenius enjoys writing little fabliaux about lustful monks and nuns ⁴⁹ He makes several admiring references to the Medmenham Monks, and one of his most salacious poems is *The Confession of Sir Francis of Medmenham and of the Lady Mary his Wife* The confessions are obscene, and the friar who absolves the precious pair exposes himself as cynically lecherous The author appends the disingenuous apology "The sins of Lubricity, however shocking, or unnatural, are handled in this absurd and impious manner by Escobar, and all the most celebrated Casuists amongst the Jesuits"

Political and religious prejudices are blended in *An Essay upon the King's Friends, with an Account of some Discoveries made in Italy and Found in a Virgil, concerning the Tories* To Dr Samuel Johnson (1776) By pretending that he has discovered a perfect manuscript of the *Æneid*, Hall-Stevenson is able to place all the Tories in Tartarus Dr Johnson himself is there So also is Laud

Leading the martyr Charles through thick and thin,
Scourg'd for ten thousand years, and scourg'd by Pryn

⁴⁸ *An Epistle to the Grown Gentlewomen the Misses of* ———

⁴⁹ See *Pantty's Tale* and *Don Pringello's Tale*

We also see James II and the Old Pretender

in monkish weeds,
Muttering fantastic prayers, and dropping beads

Hall-Stevenson's attitude toward religion represents one of several possible consequences of that Whiggish latitudinarianism which was so often observed in Volume I. His hatred of Rome implies no genuine ardor for Protestantism. *The Black Bird* shows that, like many of his contemporaries, he reviles popery as a safe means of reviling organized Christianity in general. The fable is designed to defend *Tristram Shandy* against some of its clerical opponents. Sterne is the blackbird whose secular song disturbs the chanting of the monastic owls.

Imposing rogues, with looks demure,
At Rome keep all the world in awe,
Wit is profane, learning impure,
And reasoning against the law,
Between two tapers and a book,
Upon a dresser clean and neat,
Behold a sacerdotal Cook,
Cooking a dish of heavenly meat!
How fine he curtsies! Make your bow,
Thump your breast soundly, beat your poll,
Lo! he has dished up a ragout,
To fill the belly of your soul

Thence it is an easy transition to that branch of the Church in which Sterne himself is commissioned to celebrate the Eucharist

Even here there are some holy men
Would fain lead people by the nose,
Did not a Black Bird now and then
Benevolently interpose
My good Lord Bishop, Mr Dean,
You shall get nothing by your spite,
Tristram shall whistle at your spleen,
And put hypocrisy to flight

But Eugenius's scorn of hypocrisy is a little too hypocritical for my stomach, and I am glad to take my leave of him

A close friend of Hall-Stevenson and of course of Churchill was John Wilkes (1727-1797)—infidel, rake, demagogue, and withal a true champion

of liberty His father was a nonconformist distiller, the son abandoned the paternal faith but remained loyal to the liquor As a student at Leyden, Wilkes formed a friendship with the atheistic young Baron d'Holbach, who is thought to have influenced his views on religion or at least to have shown him that a man of pleasure might acquire a comforting philosophy

A leading Medmenhamite, Wilkes privately printed for his fellow-monks a collection of blasphemously obscene parodies of the *Essay on Man*, the *Veni Creator*, and other serious poems The parody of Pope, entitled *An Essay on Woman*, contained burlesque "Notes and a Commentary by Dr Warburton" These poems will not be examined here, partly because the most representative passages are unquotable and partly because no one seems to be sure that an original and ungarbled text has survived The *Essay on Woman*, of course, was seized upon by Wilkes's political foes as a pretext for silencing *The North Briton* Warburton can hardly be blamed for condemning the poem, but when the profligate Earl of Sandwich attacked it in the House of Lords he presented a spectacle of hypocrisy which no popish casuist had ever equalled

Robert Lloyd (1733-1764) was a visitor at Medmenham Abbey and perhaps a member of the club His father, the Reverend Pierson Lloyd, fourth-form usher and second master at Westminster School, was something of a saint Robert himself was educated at Westminster among schoolfellows who included Churchill, Cowper, the elder Colman, Bonnell Thornton, Richard Cumberland, Elijah Impey, and Warren Hastings After graduating from Cambridge he began to teach in his old school but soon resigned to make his living by writing and editing "He was contented," says Wilkes, "to scamper round the foot of Parnassus on his little Welsh pony, which seems never to have tired He left the fury of the winged steed and the daring heights of the sacred mountain to the sublime genius of his friend Churchill"⁴⁸ He emulated Churchill more closely in his way of life though his heart was gentle, his conduct was very loose

In most of his poems Lloyd appears as a lightly prattling imitator of Prior His satires are not very mordant Indeed, his work not infrequently suggests that under different influences he might easily have followed the path of sentiment rather than that of wit There are touches of playful and rather tender fancy and a thin trickle of lyricism His *Progress of Envy* is a fairly good imitation of Spenser, and he frequently praises Shakespeare as the

⁴⁸ Chalmers, XV, 74

representative of a nature which is superior to art⁴⁶ But Lloyd was a weak, suggestible man whose associates were Churchill, Wilkes, and Garrick, not Shenstone and the Warton brothers His latent sentimentalism was submerged by the spirit of the town

Lloyd's verses are seldom indecent but have little or nothing to do with religion *A Familiar Epistle to J B, Esq* portrays a sleek, worldly, successful parson who leaves all the work to his curate, a man too genuinely learned and pious to rise in the Church One feels, however, that the curate is praised chiefly in order that the rector may be exposed To the Reverend Mr Hanbury he addresses *Charity A Fragment*, which contains a long passage on the tyranny and superstition of Rome Thence he passes to a more general address to the spirit of bigotry

No matter of what shape or size,
Gulp down the legendary lies,
Believe, what neither God ordains,
Nor Christ allows, nor sense maintains,
Make saint of pope, or saint of thief,
Believe almost in unbelief,
Yet with thy solemn priestly air,
By book and bell, and candle swear,
That God has made his own elect
But from your stem and favorite sect,
That he who made the world, has blest
One part alone, to damn the rest,
As if th' Allmerciful and Just,
Who form'd us out of common dust,
Had render'd up his own decree,
And lent his attributes to thee
Thus his own eyes the bigot blinds,
To shut out light from human minds,
And the clear truth (an emanation
From the great author of creation,
A beam transmitted from on high,
To bring us nearer to the sky,
While ev'ry path by Science trod,
Leads us with wonder up to God,)
Is doom'd by ignorance to make
Atonement at the martyr's stake

These lines ring truer than anything to be found in Whitehead or Hall-Stevenson, and they are invalidated by no blasphemous mockery in Lloyd's

⁴⁶ See for example *Shakespeare*, with its fling at "the pomp of rules "

other poems The poet's life, however, does not encourage the inference that science or anything else very frequently lifted his wondering mind to God

Among these little poets, Charles Churchill (1731-1764) is a man of considerable stature The extremely topical character of his work cannot obscure the fact that he is an excellent satirist who in a different milieu might have risen to higher types of poetry He has imagination and feeling as well as wit His detestation of cant turns him against such sentimentalists as William Whitehead, Mason, and even Gray, but he is by no means a conventional neoclassicist He dislikes rules in art no less than in life, venerates Shakespeare because "a loose he gave to his unbounded soul,"⁴⁴ and makes Dryden, not Pope, his model in satire because of his greater boldness and freedom

Thou, Nature, art my goddess—to thy law
Myself I dedicate—hence, slavish awe,
Which bends to fashion, and obeys the rules
Imposed at first, and since observed by fools⁴⁵

Here the object of his scorn is not those moral restraints which he so often flouts but the formal fripperies of art

Since Churchill was quite incapable of regarding ideas from an impersonal viewpoint, his life provides the best clue to an understanding of his work The facts of his career are familiar, but we may remind ourselves of the circumstances which conditioned his religious opinions His father was the impecunious rector of Rainham in Essex, but in 1733, two years after Charles's birth, he also became curate and lecturer at the Church of St John the Evangelist, Westminster At the age of seventeen the boy's brief and stormy university career was ended by a "Fleet" marriage The young pair took refuge under the parental roof Charles, already a very gay young buck, felt no desire whatever for holy orders, but he had no other prospects and was obligated to his long-suffering father While still a deacon, he served as curate of South Cadbury, Somerset, under one of his father's friends Here he is said to have performed his duties faithfully, though without zest, but he relieved his mind by writing *The Fortune Teller*, a poem against superstition which he laid aside and later used, with many changes, as the first book of *The Ghost*

Ordained priest in 1756, he acted as curate to his father at Rainham On his father's death in 1758, he succeeded to the Westminster curacy and lec-

⁴⁴ *The Rosciad*

⁴⁵ *The Prophecy of Famine*

tureship This step proved his undoing, for the temptations of London were too much for the rebellious young priest Soon he was ranging the town with his old schoolfellow Robert Lloyd, doing extremely unclerical things in extremely unclerical costume He did not resign from St John's until 1763, but as early as 1761 he had become the libertine satirist whom we know as Charles Churchill

Of all the Medmenhamites, only Churchill had actually practised, as a matter of professional duty, the mummery of priestcraft He never ceased to feel that his ordination had thwarted the career of a poet

But what are numbers, what are bards, to me,
 Forbid to tread the paths of poesy?
 "A sacred Muse should consecrate her pen,
 Priests must not hear nor see like other men
 Far higher themes should her ambition claim
 Behold where Sternhold points the way to fame"⁴⁸

Always his views are colored by his personal loves and hates He sounds like a devout Christian when he tells how,

Sinking beneath the storm, my spirits fail'd,
 Like Peter's faith, till one, a friend indeed—
 May all distress find such in time of need—
 One kind, good man, in act, in word, in thought,
 By virtue guided, and by wisdom taught,
 Image of him whom Christians should adore,
 Stretch'd forth his hand, and brought me safe to shore⁴⁹

But this Christ-like figure is the Reverend Dr Pierson Lloyd, his old schoolmaster, who had obligingly paid the debts of his son's best friend Churchill was a visitor at Medmenham Abbey and may even have been one of the "monks," but when Dashwood and his steward Paul Whitehead join the "King's friends," *The Candidate* affects to be shocked at their revels He can also be highly edifying when he rebukes Martin, who severely wounded Wilkes in a duel, as a "daring infidel"⁵⁰ Another personal enemy of Wilkes and Churchill, the Reverend Philip Francis, is attacked in a strain of high moral indignation as

Ripe to betray his Saviour for reward,
 The atheist chaplain of an atheist lord

Churchill's pet aversion was Dr Zachariah Pearce, Bishop of Rochester and Dean of Westminster, who in the latter capacity objected to Churchill's

⁴⁸ *The Author*

⁵⁰ *The Conference*

⁵¹ *The Duellist*

writing so very secular a poem as *The Rosciad* "Churchill replied with a somewhat irrelevant gibe at Pearce's translation of Longinus, whereupon the Dean requested him to put off his new lay clothes and assume a more clerical habit. On the complaint of the parishioners of St. John the Evangelist Churchill was once more censured by Pearce, and resigned his lectureship in January, 1763."⁵² Hence in *The Ghost* this prelate appears as

Avaro,—by long use grown bold
In every ill which brings him gold,
Who his Redeemer would pull down,
And sell his God for half-a-crown,
Who if some blockhead should be willing
To lend him on his soul a shilling,
A well-made bargain would esteem it,
And have more sense than to redeem it

But when the nocturnal pranks of Churchill and Lloyd disturb the good folk of St. John's, the curate ceases to pose as the indignant friend of Christianity and presents *Night* in defense of the curious thesis that since so many rascals are abroad in daylight, honest men must go about after dark. From this poem an unsympathetic reader might infer that undisguised vice is virtue "Hypocrisy and prudence are the same," says Churchill "Keep up appearances, there lies the test. Vice is virtue when 'tis well conceal'd." All those who do not share his fondness for a wench and a bottle are smug hypocrites

Shall wretches, whom no real virtue warms,
Gild fair their names and states with empty forms,
While Virtue seeks in vain the wish'd for prize,
Because, disdaining ill, she hates disguise?

Might the whole world be placed within my span,
I would not be that thing, that prudent man

This was one sort of corruption which Churchill need not greatly have dreaded

Even this satirist's less obviously autobiographical dicta on religion and morals must be interpreted in relation to the circumstances of his life. To be sure, his anticlericalism, his campaign against "hypocrisy," his dislike of popish superstition and nonconformist enthusiasm, and his libertine swagger are traits shared with other poets of his school, but in him they are

⁵² James Laver in his edition of *The Poems of Charles Churchill*, p. 216n

rendered acute by his undying resentment of the fact that he is a priest of the Church

If night is the time when honest libertines display their openness of heart,
the early morning is the time

when devotees
Breathe pious curses on their knees⁵³

Churchill also has a keen eye for those

She-saints, who, true to Pleasure's plan,
Talk about God, and lust for man⁵⁴

Whitefield he sees merely as the last in a long line of priestly impostors running back to ancient times

At Delphos, to Apollo dear,
All men the voice of Fate might hear,
Each subtle priest on three-legg'd stool,
To take in wise men, play'd the fool,
A mystery, so made for gain,
E'en now in fashion must remain
Enthusiasts never will let drop
What brings such business to their shop,
And that great saint, we Whitefield call
Keeps up the humbug spiritual⁵⁵

When Superstition herself appears in the allegorical parade in Book IV of *The Ghost*, Churchill's description associates her with popery. She bears a crucifix in one hand and a two-edged sword in the other,

Having her brows, in impious sport,
Adorn'd with words of high import,
"On earth peace, amongst men good will,
Love bearing, and forbearing still,"
All wrote in the heart's blood of those
Who rather death than falsehood chose,
On her breast,

The Virgin pictur'd at full length,
Whilst at her feet, in small pourtray'd,
As scarce worth notice, Christ was laid

⁵³ *The Ghost*

⁵⁴ *Ibid*

⁵⁵ *Ibid*

There are affirmations as well as negations in the poems of Churchill. He frequently asserts his belief in reason, nature, virtue, conscience, and freedom. Reason he defines in *The Apology* as

Lord Chief-Justice in the court of man,
Equally form'd to rule in age and youth,
The friend of Virtue, and the guide to truth
To her I bow, whose sacred power I feel,
To her decision make my last appeal,

By her absolved, my course I'll still pursue
If Reason's for me, God is for me too

From *Night* one gathers that Churchill and Lloyd, unlike their hypocritical detractors, live in accordance with reason

Men of sense live exempt from vulgar awe,
And Reason to herself alone is law
That freedom she enjoys with liberal mind,
Which she so freely grants to all mankind

And the conclusion of this poem implies that reason, virtue, nature, and freedom are closely related concepts, for the author addresses Lloyd

Stedfast and true to virtue's sacred laws,
Unmov'd by vulgar censure or applause,
Let the World talk, my Friend, that World, we know,
Which calls us guilty, cannot make us so
Unaw'd by numbers, follow Nature's plan,
Assert the rights, or quit the name of man

The essence of nature is freedom

Nature who, in her act most free,
Herself delights in liberty,
Profuse in love, and without bound,
Pours joy on every creature round,
Whom yet, was every bounty shed
In double portions on our head,
We could not truly bounteous call,
If freedom did not crown them all⁵⁸

Whatever it may be termed, there is something in man's breast which tells him that he is right in doing whatever he wants to do

⁵⁸ *The Ghost*

Reason, one is somewhat astonished to learn from *The Conference*, has lifted Wilkes's collaborator far above the spirit of faction

I feel no wish above
The good of England, and my country's love
Stranger to party-rage, by reason's voice,
Unerring guide, directed in my choice,
Not all the tyrant powers of earth combined,
No, nor of hell, shall make me change my mind

But for Churchill "the good of England" has a definitely partisan meaning In the reign of George III he preserves all the passions of a rather violent old-fashioned Whiggery The conclusion of *Gotham* expresses hatred of the Stuarts, and in particular of James II, who stood

'Gainst all the rights of Nature's general plan,
'Gainst all which constitutes an Englishman

On the other hand Nassau, in a way very familiar to readers of Volume I, is glorified as a "saviour" To live in agreement with reason and nature, then, is to be a true Englishman and, indeed, to be a true man

Virtue supreme enthron'd, within his breast
The image of his Maker deep impress'd,
Lord of this earth, which trembles at his nod,
With reason bless'd, and only less than God

Churchill will govern his realm of Gotham according to the ideas of Bolingbroke's *Patriot King* He will give his people not only political but religious freedom, for by the light of reason he will

Into the depth of that religion pry
Which law hath sanction'd, let me find out there
What's form, what's essence, what, like vagrant air,
We well may change, and what, without a crime,
Cannot be changed to the last hour of time

The religious essentials which survive this winnowing will, we may be sure, be few and simple He promises his imaginary subjects that he will protect them against bigotry and priestcraft.

Fear not, my people! where no cause of fear
Can justly rise—your king assures you here,
Your king, who scorns the haughty prelate's nod,
Nor deems the voice of priests the voice of God

In Gotham there will be no Zachariah Pearce to curb the freedom of nature
Does Churchill really believe all this? Almost unquestionably, he thinks he does. He even prays for the courage to die for his ideals in *The Conference* he exhorts the "God of Truth"

Grant me thy strength, and in that needful hour,
(Should it e'er come) when Law submits to Power,
With firm resolve my steady bosom steel,
Bravely to suffer, though I deeply feel

Pending martyrdom, however, he will exercise the almost God-like function of the poet

In earth, in heaven, no subject can be found
(Our God alone except) above whose height
The poet cannot rise, and hold his state
The blessed saints above in numbers speak
The praise of God, though all their praise is weak,
In numbers here below the bard shall teach
Virtue to soar above the villain's reach ⁸⁷

It is not quite fair to descend from this lofty summit to the mire of Churchill's actual life. Our study will reveal several men whose verses are full of Christian piety but who lived no more edifyingly than he. All one can say is that his cult of reason and nature worked no better than the faith of the bigots whom he despised. He had a mind and heart which under other circumstances might have nourished a vital religion. Wilkes always denied the report that his friend's dying words were "What a fool I have been!" We may more justly conclude with that line from *The Candidate* which was used as his epitaph "Life to the last enjoy'd, here Churchill lies"

Readers of Volume I will see in Churchill an excellent example of what I have termed "libertine sentimentalism" ⁸⁸ A less impulsive, more systematic type of opposition to organized Christianity is illustrated by William Kenrick (1725?-1779). The son of a Hertfordshire staymaker, he himself had some experience as an artisan but soon became a hack writer and specialist in libel. Though not a stupid man, he was sottish, ill-tempered, envious, treacherous, and almost insanely conceited. He liked to parade his infidelity in taverns. In 1751 he published a pamphlet against immortality and then, since no refutation appeared, answered it himself.

⁸⁷ *The Author*

⁸⁸ For other examples, see the Index of Topics of Vol. I

Kenrick's poems⁸⁹ are usually mediocre exercises in the witty tradition. In *The Town* he briefly castigates the modish chaplain and the starveling curate who

skips the Collects o'er
To get a Breakfast with a gen'rous Whore

A fable entitled *The Force of Prejudice* tells how a beautiful god descends to an African town inhabited by humpbacked blackamoors. They think him very ugly and abuse him as a monster, but a Negro sage, who has travelled among white people, makes the obvious relativistic remarks⁹⁰

More substantial are the long pieces in Prioeresque octosyllabic couplets, each with the subtitle "An Epistle to Lorenzo," which are scattered at intervals through *Poems, Ludicrous, Satirical, and Moral* (1768). Freedom of thought is defended in *On the Investigation of Truth*. Man's love of being duped, his intellectual laziness and cowardice, are the result of bad education. In the beginning Reason and Genius were fellow-students in the school of Experience, where they learned from "Nature's books." But Genius, "insolent and wild," trusted to his "forward parts" and neglected his lessons. The creations of his fancy, once intended merely for delight, were seized upon by priests as devices for the suppression or perversion of reason. Delightful fiction became dogma through the influence of Tradition.

She told the stories, o'er and o'er,
That Genius told the Arts before,
Repeating lies, as liars do,
Till in the end they think them true,
And when detected in her lie,
"Myst'ry"—the biter's arch reply

In our infancy, "The nurse but molds us for the priest" by filling our minds with superstitious tales which we are unable to distinguish from the truth. As we grow up, hell easily replaces the "dark hole," Judgment Day "Blackmonday," and heaven the toys which were promised us for good behavior. The muse, once merely the innocent source of this corruption of reason, now

⁸⁹ I have read by no means all of his very numerous poems, many of which are uncollected. My discussion of him is based on *The Town* (1748) and *Poems, Ludicrous Satirical and Moral* (1768). The latter, a volume of 307 pages, probably gives a sufficient notion of his qualities.

⁹⁰ According to Kenrick the "hint" of this fable is "from Helvetius," but I cannot place the story. The theme, of course, is as old as Xenophanes. In this connection it may be noted that Kenrick translated Rousseau's *Nouvelle Héloïse* (1761) and *Miscellaneous Works* (1767). I see no unmistakable signs of Rousseau's influence in his poems. He is more of a *philosophe* than a sentimentalist and may have drawn some of his ideas from Helvétius and other Frenchmen of that ilk, but the English deists themselves could have given him all that he has to say.

actively furthers the cheat The "tale of wonder," originally a thing of jollity, has become enslaved by Spleen,

For whom her numbers, sad and slow,
In dismal melancholy flow,
Condemn'd to murmur all the day,
To sigh and groan the midnight lay,
The skull, the spade, the shroud, the herse,
The doleful implements of verse

Graveyard poetry goes hand in hand with superstitious and gloomy zeal

'Twas thus enthusiastic Young,
'Twas thus affected Hervey sung,
Whose motley muse, in florid strain,
With owls did to the moon complain

Kenrick prefers day to night and distrusts the repentance which arises from terror Naturally, too, he reviles the Methodists, that "enthusiastic band" of "scripture-craz'd fanaticks" Very different is the spirit of those who spurn the bondage of obscurantism

No visionary fears intrude
Where triumphs moral rectitude
Truth all the artifice disdains
Of dungeons deep and clanking chains,
Skulks not in life's sequester'd way,
But walks abroad in open day
'Tis Falsehood, her grim face to hide,
Shuffles on nature's darker side,
Baffling, in Terror's murky den,
The scrutiny of honest men

But what is truth? "'Tis that wherein mankind agree," Kenrick answers in *On Human Certitude, and the Universality of Science*

Consistent, sure's our confidence,
In search of truth, on common-sense
That gen'ral index to mankind,
To taste and genius unconfin'd,
Pointing in all one common way,
By dullness shorten'd but its ray,
Of wit and knowledge all the end
In length that radius to extend

So completely universal is common sense that "honest minds" never disagree except through misunderstanding the terms of the argument The bigot is

false to the promptings of this inward guide, he cannot really believe his incomprehensible creed

Belief's no vague declaimer's rant,
No bigot's creed, no sophist's cant,
'Tis not the scripture text to quote,
To get our catechism by rote,

True faith's that consciousness of soul,
That times nor accidents control

This *rational* faith cannot be enforced by persecution. It "depends on nature's laws," and the proof of its validity is that it makes intelligible sense

Let not fanaticism deceive
None can a mystery believe

In spite of their misguided zeal,
Here to their hearts let all appeal
Enough if just be their pretence
To honesty and common-sense
Here rests that umpire of mankind,
Conscience, the God within the mind

Kenrick scorns those

whose officious zeal
Pretends a consciousness to feel,
A fix'd internal evidence
Of axioms, hid from common-sense,
A stronger testimony given,
By inspiration breath'd from heaven

How can they *prove* their revelation? It is easy to be misled by the fancy, and

If heaven hath ever fir'd conceit,
Brandy hath also done the feat

Men have sometimes committed dreadful crimes because of a "revelation." Did God inspire them, or the Devil? Miracles are but priestly legerdemain. Yet though it is inconceivable that nature's laws should be broken or suspended, some apparently miraculous events may be due to natural causes which lie beyond our present knowledge. Lorenzo is told that he should not deny what he cannot disprove, but on the other hand he should not assert the truth of what he has never experienced.

The same common-sense empiricism appears in the epistle *On the weakness of the human understanding, and the incomprehensibility of the Deity*. Since God utterly transcends the reach of human understanding, any attempt to describe Him in terms of human personality is necessarily erroneous. From the Creation we can infer the existence of the Creator, but not such divine attributes as justice and love. On these points the poet is a complete agnostic.

I not deny that perfect, good,
All-gracious, merciful, and wise,
God reigns, supreme, beyond the skies
Neither, 'tis true, my terms imply,
But granting none, I none deny

Hence Kenrick urges Lorenzo to raise his votive altars to the eternal, *unknown* God, worshipped of old in Athens with "silent praise," and still so worshipped by "the Peruvian, pure in heart," who,

Strange to the guile, or guilt, of art,
Unaw'd by tenet, text, or tale,
Erects his temple in the vale,
Sacred to th' universal mind,
The God and guide of human kind

By nature taught, heav'n asks no more,
In spirit and in truth t' adore

Kenrick wrestles with another religious problem in *On the Immortality of the Soul*. He rejects the notion of eternal life as a means of assigning divine rewards or punishments. "Needs God a friend? fears God a foe?" Equally distasteful is the attempt to deduce immortality from the prevalence of the desire for it. He too would gladly live forever,

But let Lorenzo never trust
To wish or hope, however just
Nor let a passionate desire
To reason's sober task aspire

The most convincing argument for immortality may be drawn from the powers of the poetic mind, which have in them something godlike and hence undying.

Genius, Lorenzo, yours or mine,
Faint image of the pow'r divine,
Endow'd with ev'n creative power,

WITS AND SCOFFERS

To form the beings of an hour,
 To people worlds, to light the skies,
 To bid a new creation rise,

Ev'n here my friend doth nature's plan
 Prove the divinity of man
 A truth that genius feels and knows,
 As oft as with the God it glows
 And shall t' oblivion be consign'd
 This portion of th' ætherial mind?
 O, no — Come death in any form,
 I doubt not to ride out the storm,
 The shipwreck'd body to survive,
 My thinking part still left alive

We have just heard Kenrick proclaiming "the weakness of the human understanding," but that was in another poem

A favorite eighteenth-century theme is treated with some freshness in *On Happiness And the Incapacity of Mankind for Its Attainment* Even in this world man may find a relative, though not an absolute, happiness Life is a composition of interdependent light and shade

Thus exquisite our sense of woe
 As more refin'd our pleasures grow
 Pleasure and pain, as light and shade,
 By one the other still display'd
 Didst never want? to thee denied
 The bliss of being satisfied

Happiness in the last analysis is physiological

The tension of th' extended nerve,
 With physiologists may serve,
 The means of pleasure and of pain,
 The seeming paradox t' explain

While such in tune, these sages say,
 The smiling hours in concert play
 But if, in change, too lax, or tense,
 Health strikes no more the keys of sense
 But, tremblingly alive all o'er,
 The tortur'd strings in discord roar

The same relativism and materialism are expressed in the epistle *On physical and moral good and evil*. Kenrick insists that no opposing forces exist in nature, which

knows no real strife
However jarring human life,
From evil and from error free,
These only relative to thee

The ills of human life may result not merely from our inability to understand the whole system but from the fact that the system itself is yet to be completed

Time building what heaven's wisdom plann'd,
Creation's work ev'n yet in hand
Thro' nature's scenes in order range,
See all things in continual change,
All to some point progressive run,
To do, or else to be undone
Existing for so short a space,
Thousands we know but by their place,
Which chang'd, by changing form, we say
The things themselves are pass'd away

The "Chain of Being" has ceased to be a static conception: new links are constantly being added to it.

Moral evil, being merely a matter of pain and pleasure, is reducible to physical evil. There is no innate moral sense, but there is an innate disposition to seek pleasure and avoid pain, and whatever provides more pleasure than pain is regarded as good. The poet warns Lorenzo, however, that pleasures which bring pain to others will ultimately bring more pain than pleasure to us, hence the wisest self-love is love of mankind.

Kenrick thinks it probable that

all accounts 'tween vice and woe
Are settled and discharg'd below

Though he does not deny rewards and punishments in the afterlife, he has no enthusiasm for the idea. Frankly ignorant of such matters, he will rely on the God who created him:

Secure, Lorenzo, in the pow'r,
That wak'd me at my natal hour,
To me, and mine, in life so just,

On this in life I mean to trust
 Safe in the hollow of his hand,
 Content to fall by whom I stand,
 Of whom I kiss the chast'ning rod,
 And bless the father in the God

This is edifying enough. Kenrick's attitude toward Christianity is sneeringly negative, but here and elsewhere he can speak of his "unknown God" in affirmatively deistic tones that seem to deny the grubby common sense to which he is usually loyal. The negative side of his thought, however, is too strong to permit us to group him with the sentimentalists who are to be considered in later chapters.

The fourteen poets thus far examined are not all cut from precisely the same pattern. They are alike, however, in giving mainly negative results when tested for religion. Here I speak of their writings, but in most cases—Richard Owen Cambridge is the only striking exception—it is obvious that the poems are faithful expressions of the men. Though religion is one thing and morality another, one observes that most of these writers lived loosely, and some viciously. Distaste for moral restraints exerts a strong influence on their thought.

Seven of them are gentlemen, six are of the middle class, Kenrick is of plebeian origin. All, however, attempt to write like gentlefolk. They represent the aristocratic neoclassical tradition as it survives in the second half of the century. With the unimportant exceptions which have already been pointed out, these poets are impervious to romantic tendencies.

The group includes names eminent in other spheres than poetry or familiar as part of the fabric of personal chitchat which constitutes scholarly knowledge of the Age of Johnson. Only Churchill, however, occupies a place of any importance in the history of English poetry. He, with Armstrong, Whitehead, and Kenrick, writes to convince, the others are usually triflers. Agreeable triflers they often are, but their prattle betokens a weakening of the aesthetic and intellectual fibre of neoclassicism. For them Prior's octosyllabics are a more congenial medium than Pope's couplets.

Reaction against parental asceticism does not seem to be a strong factor in the religious views of these writers except perhaps in four cases. Lloyd and Churchill were the sons of Anglican clergymen, and Whitehead the son of a minister of the Kirk, while Wilkes's father was a pious nonconforming layman.

In this confused period, party labels are of doubtful significance, but the only political ideas which seem to bear upon the religious views of these writers are those associated with the Whig tradition. In Walpole, Hall-Stevenson, and Churchill the reader of Volume I will recognize that "No Popery—no Stuarts—great Nassau—great Brunswick—liberty—toleration—pure and rational religion" complex which descends from the Whigs of an earlier day.

Most members of the group, however, seem to have lost even the nebulous faith implied by these slogans. Their most characteristic tone is one of sceptical indifference which sometimes protects itself by disingenuous sneers at "enthusiasm" and "hypocrisy." At their hands Christianity receives no penetrating criticism, and few of them attempt, like Kenrick, to provide a substitute for the creed which they have rejected. In the rare instances when they suggest constructive religious ideas they reflect the influence of the cult of sentiment. Armstrong toys with the notions of moral sense and universal benevolence, Moore speaks politely of "Nature's God", Lloyd asserts that science leads the mind to God through nature, Churchill buttresses his libertinism with professions of belief in nature, reason, virtue, conscience, and freedom, Kenrick, more doctrinaire than his fellows, preaches a deism which, though mainly dry and hard, has a few soft spots. It is interesting to see the tradition of original genius⁶¹ surviving in poets so unromantic as Kenrick and Churchill. On the whole, however, the scepticism which turns these men from Christianity also, though in less degree, prohibits a wholehearted acceptance of sentimentalism.

"Here," some readers will be inclined to say, "is the *real* eighteenth century—worldly, elegant, witty, cynical, politely indifferent or mockingly hostile to spiritual concerns." Beyond question this group represents a powerful trend in eighteenth-century thought—more powerful than the poetry of the age, separately regarded, would indicate, since scepticism is always recalcitrant poetic material. But, as we shall see, other tendencies of the 1740–1780 period are equally potent, and some of them provide more favorable soil for poetry.

⁶¹ See "Genius" in the Index of Topics of Vol. I.

Chapter III

UNENTHUSIASTIC CHRISTIANS

TALK AS WE MAY ABOUT THE INFIDELITY OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY, THE FACT remains that during the period of our study an overwhelming majority of Englishmen regarded themselves as good Christians. Among these believers, furthermore, the concept of a completely nonecclesiastical Christianity was almost unknown. To be a Christian was to be a member of the Christian Church, and most Englishmen would have interpreted "Christian Church" to mean "Church of England."

But Christianity as preached and lived within the Anglican Church in about 1740 was only a little more conducive to poetry than the unbelief which formed the main theme of the preceding chapter. Its flat, sluggish, latitudinarian spirit, its dread of popish superstition and puritanical enthusiasm, its emphasis on coolness and moderation, its avoidance of supernatural "mystery" in favor of a this-worldly ethical utilitarianism were not likely to arouse an emotional and imaginative, or even a penetratingly intellectual, response. The Establishment, as Mr. Norman Sykes has rightly insisted,¹ was less corrupt and lazy than has often been supposed. With a cheerful practicality it fulfilled the letter of its duty towards God and rather more than the letter of its duty towards man. But on the whole it did not feel and hence did not inculcate the great Christian-poetic passions: knowledge of sin and hope of salvation through the Cross, the mingled abasement and confidence inspired by the Incarnation, the sense of membership in an eternal supernatural society, mystical union with God; sacramental union with God. All the vitalizing sorrow and dread and gladness which are the core of Christianity and the source of Christian poetry seemed a little too rarefied for everyday parochial uses. Christianity was a sensible device for adding ethical compulsion to the truths of natural religion. The Church of England was simply the form of Protestantism established by the laws of

¹ See his *Church and State in England in the Eighteenth Century*

the realm Presumably you wish to go to heaven? The path lies broad and straight before you Do your work honestly, lead a moral but not rigidly ascetic life, be a good neighbour, be charitable, be loyal to the House of Hanover, say your prayers, go to your parish church, and if possible communicate three times a year The thing called "everlasting life" begins only on the other side of the grave

What has just been said applies to the main central body of Anglicanism, in which the Whiggish-latitudinarian element was dominant There were also, especially in country parishes, Tory clerics with much "higher" views of the Church In the main their ecclesiasticism was political rather than religious, but some of them preserved vestiges of seventeenth-century Anglo-Catholicism More important so far as the eighteenth century is concerned was a group of Churchmen who retained much of the old puritan temper, and who were to become the fathers of Evangelicalism One may also discern the germs of that extreme Protestant liberalism which in 1771 would lead Archdeacon Blackburne to advocate abolition of subscription to the Thirty-Nine Articles

Making all due allowances for such disciples of Watts as Philip Doddridge, one may say that Nonconformity, as it existed in 1740, was hardly less smug and sleepy than Anglicanism The old sectarian spirit was maintained chiefly in obscure chapels of humble folk who had but little influence on the thought of the period With the rise of the middle class, the scions of the more prosperous dissenting families showed a tendency to reap the social advantages of conformity Especially among the English Presbyterians, on the other hand, the more liberal and intellectual Dissenters were rapidly drifting into Arianism and thence into Socinianism

Between 1740 and 1780, Methodism and Evangelicalism were to affect considerably the conditions which the foregoing paragraphs have described Nevertheless, both in the Church of England and in Nonconformist circles, the antipoetic spirit remains a potent influence throughout this period But even the most unenthusiastic Christianity is not completely lacking in appeal to the imagination In this chapter, therefore, we may bring together the work of poets who are obviously Christians, but whose religion does not reflect the special interests of the Evangelical Revival or of the sentimental movement The material will inevitably be dull, and the reader may skip it if he chooses In so doing, however, he will miss one side of a contrast which will be developed in later chapters

It matters little who will lead this procession of nonentities, but the honor may be granted to a woman Mary Leapor (1722-1746)³ was the daughter of a Northamptonshire gardener. She had very little formal education but avidly read poetry from an early age. She is believed to have supported herself as a cookmaid. Some of the gentry took an interest in her poems and planned to publish them by subscription, but she died of measles before this kindly scheme could be carried out. In response to her deathbed request, her verses were published in two volumes, 1748 and 1751, for the benefit of her father. The editor, Isaac Hawkins Browne, asserts that "Her Conduct and Behavior entirely corresponded with those virtuous and pious Sentiments which are conspicuous in her poems."⁴

Although she wrote a good deal of secular poetry, at least half of her work is religious or seriously ethical. Her volumes contain paraphrases and imitations of psalms and other Biblical passages, versified Bible-stories, hymns, religious odes, prayers, and epitaphs. These are much more literate and competent than we should expect of a cookmaid but contain nothing noteworthy in thought or expression. That her rare attempts to be passionate and elevated are misdirected is shown by her ode on *The Crucifixion and Resurrection*:

What means the reeling Earth? O why
These Wonders in the dreadful Sky?
The frighted Sun withdraws its Beams,
Deep Groans are heard and doleful Screams
O say, what this Convulsion means
Afflicted Nature with a Shriek replies,
A God expires, a mighty Saviour dies

She is better at expressing the Newtonian ideas⁵ of *The Enquiry*, for here she can imitate Pope, her favorite model since childhood:

All Matter lives, and shows its Maker's Power,
There's not a Seed but what contains a Flower
Tho' unobserved its secret Beauty lies,
Till we are blest with Microscopick Eyes

The impress of Pope is particularly obvious in a group of moral essays and epistles.⁶ Here she attempts to make her point through witty character

³ Probably a good deal of her work was composed before 1740, but since she was only a girl of eighteen in that year she is discussed here rather than in Vol. I.

⁴ "To the Reader." For I. H. Browne, see *Religious Trends in English Poetry*, I, 472-75.

⁵ See "Newtonianism" in the Index of Topics of Vol. I.

⁶ *Essay on Happiness, An Essay on Hope, An Epistle to a Lady*

sketches but relapses into a more stodgy sort of preachment than her master would have approved

Miss Leapor admires Pope not only as an artist but as a religious thinker His *Universal Prayer* should bring "careless Ones" to their knees and teach "stern Enthusiasts" that

'Tis from the Heart true Piety must flow

Let angry Zealots quarrel for a Name,
The good, the just, the virtuous are the same
Grace to no Sect, nor Virtue is confin'd,
They blend with all, and spread amongst the kind,
And the pure flame that warms the virtuous Breast,
Those cannot merit who condemn the rest ⁶

The same poem tells us that Religion originally came to man "All drest in smiles" But some religious teachers "veil'd her Beauties in the Mask of Rage" Their bigotry in turn has caused a libertine reaction against *all* religion

That true religion is cheerful is therefore one of her favorite ideas She answers with a vigorous though wordy negative the question "Is Mirth a Crime?"⁷ In praising rural retirement she makes clear her disapproval of the gloomy, superstitious variety *The Beauties of the Spring* invites a friend to "Sylvan Bowers" where

no gloss'd Hate, no sainted Wolves are seen,
Nor busy Faces throng the peaceful Green,
But Fear and Sorrow leave the careful Breast,
And the glad Soul sinks happily to Rest ⁸

In an allegorical vision-poem, *The Fields of Melancholy and Ghearfulness*, the latter is exalted over the former Melancholy's realm is associated with a bigotry which has inverted itself into scepticism

It is interesting to see how completely this humble woman has adopted the smiling tolerance of latitudinarianism But she is too naive and conventional to be truly sentimental in her optimism She simply clings, with cheerful complacency, to what she regards as the essentials of Christianity In *A Request to the Divine Being* she prays first for the staple virtues and then asks

Feed me with necessary Food,
I ask not Wealth nor Fame

⁶ On Mr Pope's *Universal Prayer*

⁷ *The Question Occasion'd by a serious Admonition*

⁸ See also *A Summer's Wish*

But give me Eyes to view thy Works,
And Sense to praise thy Name

May my still Days obscurely pass,
Without Remorse or Care,
And let me for the passing Hour,
My trembling Ghost prepare

Until that hour approaches, however, her sensible spirit will tremble very little

After the ladies, the clergy The Reverend James Merrick (1720-1769)* produced in 1765 a smooth but uninspired version of the Psalms which reached an eighth edition as late as 1822 His thirty-page volume of *Poems on Sacred Subjects* (1763) contains only nine pieces, four of which are paraphrases and one a translation The free and somewhat verbosely lyrical quality of the paraphrases may be illustrated from his rendering of the *Nunc Dimittis*

'Tis enough the hour is come,
Now within the silent tomb
Let this mortal frame decay,
Mingled with its kindred clay
Since thy mercies, oft of old
By thy chosen Seers foretold,
Faithful now and stedfast prove,
God of Truth, and God of Love

I have no clue to the source of *Verses written originally in the Persic language* The thought is that friendship and enmity originate not in man but in God The last stanza preserves a faint trace of aphoristic oriental "wisdom" which might not have displeased Emerson

Not from the Bow the deaths proceed,
But from the Archer's skill,
Who lends the thirsty shaft its speed,
And gives it strength to kill

This bit of religious exoticism mingles strangely with Merrick's tamely Anglican work

* The son of a Reading physician He became a fellow of Trinity, Oxford, in 1745 and was ordained in the same year Because of ill health he never held a cure and preached only occasionally In 1749 he left Oxford to spend the remainder of his quiet, studious life in Reading Besides editing and translating Tryphiodorus's *Destruction of Troy* he produced a number of prose works on religious subjects and on the study of Greek

The four original pieces in this volume resemble the paraphrases in being competent, dignified, and unexciting fabrications of pious words. It is significant, however, that this erudite clergyman appears to distrust learning and reason in the sphere of religion. "Teach me," he prays,

to know how weak the mind,
That yields to erring pride,
And let my doubting Reason find
Thy Word its safest guide

Let me not, lost in Learning's maze,
Religion's flame resign
For what's the worth of human praise,
Compar'd, my God, to thine?¹⁰

The Ignorance of Man pictures a helpless baby struggling to express its woes and wants "That infant, Lord, am I" Ignorant of the source of his distress, ignorant of how to cure it, Merrick affirms a childlike trust in God. But although this pre-Tennysonian infant has "no language but a cry," the cry is that of a precociously cool and rational child.

The fact that Samuel Bowden (fl 1733-1761), nonconformist physician of Frome in Somerset, was the friend and fellow-townsmen of Mrs. Elizabeth Rowe makes one turn to his poems¹¹ with the expectation of discovering some degree of dissenting zeal. This hope is raised still higher by the Preface, which rather clumsily restates the theory of divine poetry laid down by such pious souls as John Dennis, Isaac Watts, and Richard Blackmore.¹² Poetry originates in religion. "It is generally allowed, that the book of *Job* was wrote originally in verse. And several parts of the scripture, *Isaiah* in particular, are wrote with a truly sublime, poetical, or rather Pindaric spirit." Among the pagans, too, "the oldest compositions were all of the same stamp, and strain, all inspired with raptures of praise, and flights of devotion." The present corruption of this sublime art is lamentable. To be sure, there are people who dislike and disapprove of poetry, but "persons of this

¹⁰ *A Hymn*

¹¹ I have not seen *Poetical Essays, on several occasions* (2 vols., London, 1733, 1735). My discussion is based upon *Poems on Various Subjects, With Some Essays in Prose, Letters to Correspondents, etc.* (Bath, 1754). The preface suggests, though rather vaguely, that this includes all the poems in the earlier collection with a good many additions. Its 390 pages probably omit nothing essential to an understanding of Bowden. For Mrs. Rowe, see *Religious Trends in English Poetry*, I, 134-40.

¹² See "Poetry" in the Index of Topics of Vol. I.

rigid, cynical, and untuneable composition, as they lose much of their happiness on earth, so they are like to enjoy a smaller part of the joys and felicitys of heaven, which are said to consist chiefly of praise and melody, songs and hallelujahs”

Yet when we pass from the Preface to the poems, no hallelujahs greet our ears. Except for a few stereotyped funeral elegies, the volume is devoid of strictly “divine” poetry. A passage in the Preface attempts to forestall criticism on this point. Some readers may object, he says, that he has generally confined himself to “low and trivial subjects. But people of this stamp can relish nothing but *divine hymns*, and *spiritual songs*, all poetry with them is prophane, and pagan, if not inspired with pious breathings, and tagg’d with texts of scripture. But, such *seraphic* critics should consider that a useful, moral, and divine instruction may be derived from little subjects, and insignificant accidents, as flowers are produced from humble offsprings, and impure dirt. However mean, therefore, or uninspir’d, the performance may be in other respects, it so far merits regard, that the *moral sentiment* is preserv’d throughout, and poetry made the vehicle of instruction, whenever the theme would permit of it.”

Bowden’s verses, however, do not very impressively substantiate this apology. They are chiefly quite harmless but inane occasionals such as *To a Gentleman, Who sitting near a Young Lady, presented a Pop-Gun at the Author* (“Your shot may wound—but hers can kill”). He is not always so frivolous. *An Epitaph upon a Negro Servant* observes, with some ingenuity, that we are all black in the darkness of the tomb.

The good doctor is staunch in his detestation of popery. With much complacency he congratulates the Reverend Mr. Lionel Seaman “On His Building a new Vicarage-House at Frome, on the Ruins of the old House.” Greatly superior is the new edifice to that “old monastic Structure,” built

When superstition her dark empire spread,
And learning lurk’d in cobweb, and in shade

Close by the pile, where stood the ancient hall,
A new Gymnasium rears its humbler wall,
Religion thus, with learning in her eye,
Together rise—and shall together die.¹⁸

¹⁸ To the Reverend Mr. Lionel Seaman, M. A. “Gymnasium,” alas, is not here used in its modern English sense.

Other shortcomings of monasticism are assailed in *An Epithalamium*

Let cynic monks, or bearded hermits dwell,
In some lone cloyster, or sequester'd cell,
Mankind for nobler purposes were made,
Not born to live in solitude, and shade

But there is no attempt to rebuke Rome by an appeal to the purer ideals of Calvinism To judge from these poems, Bowden is as "broad" as the laziest of Anglicans Symptomatic is *To an Ingenious Young Lady, Ruffled with Passion, Who grew Calm on Reading some Lines in Epictetus*

Peace to the soul of that immortal Sage,
Who gave you peace, and calm'd the rising rage
Sacred the page, the writing all divine,
Where heavenly rhetoric dwells in every line

He adds several couplets in praise of Stoicism without suggesting a surer remedy for ruffled passions

As Chapter V will show, Bowden dislikes Methodism even more violently than Popery One of his prose essays detects a taint of enthusiasm even in *The Common Practice of Casting Water, Or, Prediction of Urine* "People are led aside by every thing which looks marvelous and mysterious This will always be the case when reason and solid judgment are neglected When common sense departs, then prodigy, and credulity, charms, and incantations will, like so many spectres, start up in its room, and succeed the close of day-light If people depart from reason, the next step either in physic, or divinity, is madness, and methodism, superstition and Inspiration, for where reason and philosophy end, there bigotry and ignorance begin "

As a physician, he carefully distinguishes between the real and the reputed virtues of the well at Glastonbury, which has been visited on Sunday mornings by superstitious pilgrims like those of the Middle Ages

Water that has intrinsic merit,
Needs no support from dream, or spirit
True virtue in this fountain lies,
Without imputed sanctities,
Founded on solid fact, and cure,
This only will its fame secure,
Fixt on this basis, 'twill not mock us,
But all the rest is Hocus Pocus ¹⁴

¹⁴ *Superstition, A Tale Or, The Glastonbury Pilgrimage*

Even his praise of a venerable Quaker is twisted into an attack on enthusiasm

Attentive crowds oft listen to thy strain,
Which free from loud, enthusiastic cant,
No impulse feels of rhapsody and rant
Pleas'd we behold exalted virtue shine,
And in thy doctrine trace the light divine ¹⁵

But with all this disapproval of superstition and fanaticism, the poems of Dr Bowden display no signs of positive Protestant faith. The wide gap between his Preface and his text suggests the decadent state of Nonconformity at the beginning of our period.

From this unattractive specimen of Dissent we return, not very hopefully, to Anglicanism. Many students have wondered why Chesterfield should have selected for awkward young Philip so clumsily donnish a tutor as the Reverend Walter Harte (1709-1774). ¹⁶ His poems provide no answer to this question. One can, however, credit him with precocity: the 1727 volume of *Poems on Several Occasions* is surprisingly mature for a lad of eighteen.

Harte as he appears in this early collection is far from preromantic, but his neoclassicism is of the rather tender and mellifluous kind which was being cultivated by his friends Broome and Fenton. He admires Spenser and Milton, and in one of the notes to his translation of *The Sixth Thebaid of Statius* he surprisingly refers to Chaucer as "perhaps the greatest poet among the moderns." These tastes, however, exert hardly any influence upon his own writing. ¹⁷

The *pièce de résistance* of the volume is *An Essay on Painting*, a not very coherent cluster of reflections written, he assures us, before he had read Du Fresnoy. True taste is a universal gift:

A proper taste we all derive from heav'n,
Wou'd all but bless, and manage what is giv'n

¹⁵ *Verses in Praise of an Eminent Old Speaker Amongst the Quakers, Remarkable for his Venerable Beard, and Sanctity of Manners*

¹⁶ The son of a well known nonjuring clergyman, he was educated at Marlborough School and at St. Mary Hall, Oxford, where he obtained his M.A. in 1731. He became vice principal of his college in 1740. From 1745 to 1749 he acted as tutor and traveling companion to Philip Stanhope. In 1750 he became a canon of Windsor. He was intimately acquainted with Pope, who is said to have "corrected" some of his verses. In prose he published two sermons, a volume of *Essays on Husbandry* and an ill-fated *Life of Gustavus Adolphus*.

¹⁷ *To my Soul From Chaucer* is a fairly good modernized version of *Balade de bon conseil A Simile, Upon a Set of Tea Drinkers* is presented in modern English and then "Diversify'd in Auncient Metre"—and in the most elaborately incorrect Middle English which I have observed before Chatterton.

Some secret impulse moves in ev'ry heart,
And nature's pleas'd with gentle strokes of art

But Harte neglects the opportunity to relate aesthetics and ethics in the manner of Shaftesbury. If the artist wishes to project a masterpiece,

Far let him shun the busy noise of life,
Untouch'd by cares, uncumber'd with a Wife¹⁸
Bear him, ye Muses! to sequestered woods,
To bow'ry grottoes, and to silver floods!

Where contemplation lifts her silent eye,
And lost in vision travels o'er the sky

"Contemplation" probably means no more than that Harte is trying to be Miltonic. He does not impress one as a deeply contemplative person. A rather puzzling passage declares that

True wit, and true religion are but one,
Tho' some pervert 'em, and ev'n most have done
Who thinks what others never thought before,
Acts but just that his sons will act no more
Yet on a time, when vig'rous thoughts demand,
Indulge a warmth, and prompt the daring hand
On purpose deviate from the laws of art,
And boldly dare to captivate the heart

If this implies anything but a desire to imitate Pope, it means that in religion as well as in painting there is room for boldness and innovation. Harte warns the reader, however, that *excessive* beauty collapses into the grotesque,

Where each gay figure seems to glare apart,
Without due grace, proportion, shades, or art
(The sad remains of Goths in ancient times,
And rev'rend dullness, and religious rhymes)

Harte's own early rhymes are never irreligious but almost never religious. His only divine poems in this volume are paraphrases of Psalms 104 and 107, both in very bad Miltonic blank verse.

An Essay on Satire, separately published in 1730, contains nothing which deserves notice except an antienthusiastic fling at

Fanatic Withers fam'd for rhymes and sighs,
And Jacob Behmen! most obscurely wise

¹⁸ Observe the allusion to Pomfret's *Choice*

For our purposes *An Essay on Reason* (1735) is much more important. The author describes himself as

Too brave to be by superstition aw'd,
And yet too modest to confront the God
Chain'd to no int'rest, bigot to no cause,
Slave of no hope, preferment or applause

In this poem Harte is thought to have received some assistance from Pope, but such lines suggest plagiarism rather than collaboration.

Reason, we are told, is the "essence of God" and "coeval" with Him. Hence, contrary to the assertions of the infidel, there can be no conflict between reason and religion. In Eden, "Where truth was almost felt as well as seen," reason was "nature's law." But Adam fell through excessive appetite for knowledge, "For too much truth o'erpow'rs, as too much light." The great question is not how much light we possess, but how well we use what we have. Let us be content to know ourselves, and shun dark mysteries. True science, which "only copies moral charms," is the good man's offering at the shrine of reason. Revelation regulates reason, but does not thwart it. In religion, as in all other matters, there is a difference between liberty and license. Such regulation is necessary because the perfect and eternal ideal of reason is never attained by mortal men. Hence the inadequacy of the Grecian sages—and in any case they derived most of what they knew from Noah. Similarly the wit of our *modern* pagans, when it is worth anything, comes from the Scriptures. With erring mortals, reason may be carried too far.

Reason, like virtue, in a medium lies
A hair's-breadth more might make us mad, not wise,
Out-know ev'n knowledge, and out-polish art,
Till Newton drop down giddy—a Descartes!

In short, though divine reason is perfect, human reason is but a feeble thing, and we are blest in having the surer guidance of God. The ideal is a just balance between a very temperate kind of reason and a very temperate kind of faith.

Not that my verse right reason would control,
True freedom limit, or contract the soul
Th' exchange were one from bigotry to pride,
A hair's-breadth serves to join them, or divide
Yet proper decencies must still be had,
Not meanly pious we, nor vainly mad
Reason, like Israel, Horeb's place describes,
But if she gazes wantonly, she dies

One need hardly add that he is very severe against bigotry, zeal, superstition, persecution, and so on

After 1735 one hears nothing of Harte as a poet for many years. The ill success of his *Life of Gustavus Adolphus* (1759) plunged him into a state of melancholy which aggravated chronic physical disorders. The result was a paralytic stroke which in 1766 crippled his body and his powers of speech and somewhat blurred his mind. Always a good sober Christian, he became more emphatically devout after this disaster. Some other cause must have been at work even earlier, however, for in a letter of December 18, 1763, Chesterfield tells Philip that his old tutor intends to publish a volume of divine poems. After his misfortune Harte pushed forward with this project. "I am sorry," writes Chesterfield, "as he had not time to correct them, before this stroke, nor abilities to do it since."¹⁹

In 1767 Harte's divine poems appeared in a volume entitled *The Amaranth, or, Religious Poems, Consisting of Fables, Visions, Emblems, etc.*²⁰ The introductory poem prays, not for an enkindled genius, but for a sanctified heart

Teach me the words of Jesus to impart
With energy of pow'r, but free from art

Unfortunately these poems, though much more earnestly pious than his earlier work would lead us to expect, are generally trite in theme and uninteresting in expression. Once more, as in so many poems of the century, one is reminded that "The morning of man's real life is death,"²¹ and that

All chastisements, before we reach the grave,
Are bitter med'cines, kindly sent to save²²

Less usual for a poem of the period is *Contentment, Industry, and Acquiescence Under the Divine Will. An Ode, Written in the Alpine Parts of Carniola, 1749*, for here the poet turns away from nature in order to find God

Tremble, and yonder Alp behold,
Where half-dead nature gasps below,
Victim of everlasting cold,
Entomb'd alive in endless snow
The northern side is horror all,
Against the southern, Phoebus plays,

¹⁹ Letter of July 2, 1767

²⁰ The title alludes to the "crown inwove with amaranth and gold," *Paradise Lost*, III, ll. 352ff

²¹ *The Vision of Death*

²² *Religious Melancholy*

In vain th' innoxious glimm'rings fall,
 The frost outlives, outshines the rays
 Yet consolation still I find,
 And all from Thee,
 Supremely gracious Deity,
 Corrector of the mind!

Contrast Coleridge's *Hymn Before Sunrise, in the Vale of Chamouni*

But *The Amaranth* is chiefly interesting because it often draws upon unusual material. Harte's footnotes, and to a much slighter extent his text, are studded with references to Chrysostom, Justin Martyr, Hieronymus, Basil, Jerome, Nepotion, Augustine, Bernard, Cassian, Gregory, Ambrose, Origen, Isidor, and Tertullian. In an age when the Fathers are generally neglected and scorned, this abundance of patristic lore is surprising. *The Ascetic, Or, Thomas A Kempis' A Vision* paraphrases portions of the *De Imitatione*. A footnote describes À Kempis as "certainly one of the greatest men since the primitive ages." Another unexpected name appears in *Boetius Or, the Upright Statesman*. The poem is "A Supposed Epistle from Boetius to His Wife Rusticiana." The imprisoned philosopher laments his woes in a manner reminiscent of Pope's *Eloisa* but intermingles a good many moral and religious reflections. The Argument—really a short life of Boethius—includes the remark that he "was commented upon by no less a person than Thomas Aquinas, who was one of the clearest and purest writers of his time."

How account for Harte's saturation in learning of a type which most clerics of his generation would regard as Gothic and even popish? Harte's father was a prominent nonjuring clergyman, it was the Anglo-Catholics in general and the nonjurors in particular who preserved the medieval theological traditions. *Macarius, Or, The Confessor*, a memorial to Harte's father, gives explicit evidence. Besides making the Scriptures "his chief delight," the old High Churchman was versed in "Truth's second sources"—Hermas, Cyprian, Ignatius, Minucius, Lactantius, "but mostly Chrysostom."

Plato with raptures did his soul inspire,
 Plotinus fann'd the academic fire
 Then came the Stagyrte, whose excellence
 Beams forth in clearness, brevity, and sense!
 Next, for amusement's sake, he turn'd his eyes
 To them, whom we despoil, and then despise
 Fore-most of these, unrivall'd Shakespeare stands,
 With Hooker, Raleigh, Chillingworth, and Sandys

or harm us that "Plant of joy, of life, and health," the flower which takes its name from the passion of Christ

Grant me, kind Heav'n, in prosp'rous hour
To pluck this consecrated flow'r,
And wear it thankful on my breast,
Then shall my steps securely stray,
No pleasures shall pervert my way,
No joys seduce, no cares molest

Deceiving none, by none ensnar'd,
O Paraclete, be thou my guard,²⁰
Patron of ev'ry just endeavour!
The cross of Christ is man's reward
No heights obstruct, no depths retard,
Christian joys are joys forever!

Harte is no genius in poetry or in religion, but here at least he shows that a Christianity which is neither enthusiastic nor sentimental has not wholly lost its power to stir the heart

In this, as in the preceding volume, I concern myself almost wholly with writers whose poems were published in collected form either during the eighteenth century or subsequently. But the number of such writers pertinent to the present chapter is so small that I shall include observations on a miscellaneous list of separately published divine poems. For several of these the generosity of Thomas Seaton (1684-1741) may be held responsible. Seaton attended Clare Hall, Cambridge, and became a fellow in 1708. In 1721 he was presented to the vicarage of Ravenstone, Buckinghamshire. He discussed various theological subjects in prose and in 1734 published a collection of hymns,²¹ but he is remembered solely because by his will he endowed at Cambridge a yearly prize for sacred poetry. The requirements of the competition are instructive:

I give my Kissingbury estate to the university of Cambridge for ever, the rents of which shall be disposed of yearly by the vice-chancellor for the time being, as

²⁰ Harte's footnote refers to Dryden's translation of the *Veni Creator*, where, he says, "Paraclete" is first used in English.

²¹ *The Devotional Life render'd Familiar, Easy and Pleasant, in several Hymns upon the most common occasions of Human Life*

he the vice-chancellor, the master of Clare-Hall, and the Greek professor for the time being, or any two of them, shall agree Which three persons shall give out a subject, which subject shall for the first year be one or other of the perfections or attributes of the Supreme Being, and so the succeeding years, till the subject is exhausted, and afterwards the subject shall be either Death, Judgment, Heaven, Hell, Purity of Heart, etc., or whatever else may be judged by the vice chancellor, master of Clare-Hall, and Greek professor to be most conducive to the honour of the Supreme Being and recommendation of virtue And they shall yearly dispose of the rent of the above estate to that master of arts, whose poem on the subject given shall be best approved by them Which poem I ordain to be always in English, and to be printed, the expense of which shall be deducted out of the product of the estate, and the residue given as a reward for the composer of the poem, or ode, or copy of verses²⁸

I have not attempted to discover the yearly value of the Kislbury estate, but even after deduction of printing expenses it was sufficient to inflame the piety of a goodly number of Cambridge M A's Why the prize was first given in 1750, nine years after Seaton's death, is also unknown to me Perhaps there were legal difficulties

The hardest reader could not stomach an analysis of all the pieces in *Musæ Seatonianæ, A Complete Collection of the Cambridge Prize Poems, from 1750 to the Present Time* (1772) A few examples will suffice²⁹ *The Day of Judgment*, by Richard Glynn, M D (1718-1800),³⁰ won the prize in 1757 The judges were probably impressed by his ability to argue in an emotionally oratorical style and by his far from contemptible imitation of the tricks of Miltonic blank verse The sceptic is challenged to explain the universality of belief in an after life Next, the apparent happiness of the wicked and the miseries of the good are declared to be inexplicable unless we look forward to a final act of supernatural justice The great day is described, with particulars as to various classes of goats and sheep Among the latter is included

Good Seaton! whose well-judg'd benevolence,
Fostering fair genius, bade the poet's hand
Bring annual offerings to his Maker's shrine

²⁸ Chalmers, XVI, 28

²⁹ The poems of Christopher Smart, who carried off the prize in 1750, '51, '52, '53, and '55, and of James Scott, victorious in 1760, '61, and '62, will be examined in later chapters

³⁰ In 1752 he received his M D at King's College, where he continued in residence until his death He is reputed to have been witty and learned

A passage on Charity, "nymph divinely fair," appropriately follows. Then we see the final conflagration, and hear the poet's prayer that Christ may mercifully remember man, His "own bright image," for whom He died.

Another prize poem in blank verse, *Death* (1759), is the work of Beilby Porteous (1731-1808).⁸¹ It emulates Young rather than Milton. There is a little of Young's threatening gloom and a great deal of his ejaculatory, hectoring manner. The reader is scared as badly as Porteous's very limited powers can compass. Finally, appeal is made to the Saviour:

But chiefly thou,
Whom soft-ey'd Pity once led down from Heaven
To bleed for man, to teach him how to live,
And oh! still harder lesson! how to die
Disdain not thou to smooth the restless bed
Of sickness and of pain — Forgive the tear
That feeble nature drops, calm all her fears,
Wake all her hopes, and animate her faith,
Till my rapt soul, anticipating Heaven,
Bursts from the thralldom of encumbering clay,
And on the wing of ecstasy upborn,
Springs into Liberty, and Light, and Life!

The theologically fastidious may object to the appearance of "soft-ey'd Pity" as an agent in the Incarnation. One does not like to picture an eighteenth-century personification leading God the Son from heaven to earth.

In 1763 John Hey (1734-1815)⁸² won the prize with *The Redemption*. Again blank verse is the form, and Young in his more didactic and less emotional vein the model of style. First, Hey argues for the credibility of the Christian revelation in general. Secondly, he tells the whole story of redemption from the Fall to the Cross. Finally, he reflects on this history, showing what obligations it imposes on man and answering various objections to it.

Hey is a drier spirit than Glynn or Porteous. His tone is that of a champion of reason, but the real purpose of his argument is to prove the futility

⁸¹ He became Bishop of London and was regarded as a moderate Evangelical. The poem, however, seems to belong here more definitely than anywhere else.

⁸² After serving as tutor at Sidney-Sussex College he held the Norrisian professorship of divinity at Cambridge for three successive terms, 1780-1795. He received the degree of D.D. in 1780. He was esteemed as a lecturer on ethics, published lectures and sermons, and held two livings in addition to his professorship.

of arguing Those who ask how the death of Christ reconciles us to God are answered by a reference to the *Essay on Man*

Presumptuous reptile! it is thine to know
What it is thine to practise all the rest,
To thee obscure, to God is clear as Day
Remember too—"the Universal Cause
Acts not by partial, but by gen'ral laws "

Redemption is reasonable because it is part of "one stupendous whole" which is inscrutable to reason

According to the *Dictionary of National Biography*, Hey "was a decided rationalist [in the theological sense], representing the difference between the Church of England and the Unitarians as little more than verbal, though he defended subscription to the Thirty-nine Articles" To what extent these views had developed by 1763, when Hey was twenty-nine, is uncertain, but already he is an Arminian of the latitudinarian rather than of the High Church type He is very strong for free will, but sidesteps the Incarnation and the Virgin Birth

A less rhetorical method is attempted by William Hodson²⁸ in *The Dedication of the Temple of Solomon* (1770) He simply tells the story with decorative trimmings and improving side remarks, such as

Approach,
Ye boasted Sages of proud Greece! and Rome!
Approach this sacred Scene! and blush Attend,
Oh vain Philosophy ! thou wand'ring Light!
And prostrate at this Heav'nly Scene, lament
Thy Blunders, and forego thy Pride, here cast
Thy Trophies down, undeck thyself of all
Thy borrow'd Plumes, and own the Fountain whence
Thy hoary Sons receiv'd the living Fire,
Which animates the glowing Page they penn'd

Hodson writes with an air of feeble excitement which conveys to us little more than the futility of his desire to sound Miltonic

The authors of the Seatonian poems which have been examined here do not, in their later careers, become divine poets They are merely youngish dons in pursuit of a prize As intelligent men who have received a hu-

²⁸ Not in *D N B* At this time he was a fellow of Trinity College, but later became vice-master He published *Arsaces*, a tragedy, in 1775, and *The Adventures of a Night*, a farce, in 1783

manistic education, they can write acceptable verses. They believe in Christianity and have been taught the proper things to say about it. They know that a prize-winning divine poem should be both sublime and sober. Sublimity they associate with Milton and blank verse, in Young they admire the trick of blending passion and reason in a single fabric of emotionalized argument. Their ideas are no less sincere than trite, but their feelings are worked up for the occasion. Having met the requirements of Thomas Seaton's will, they pocket the Kislbury rents, take leave of Urania, and go on about their academic or ecclesiastical business.

Many separately published poems of the period belong to the Seatonian type in the sense of being formal compositions which endeavor to treat stock religious themes in a manner both rational and elevated. Indeed Henry Parish's *Pentecost: A Poetical Fragment* (1761)²⁴ reads like an exercise in preparation for the Seatonian laurel. In very stodgy would-be Miltonic blank verse, Parish describes the scene of Pentecost with no apparent sense of its glory and strangeness. Then with equal impassivity he paraphrases Peter's address to the astonished assemblage. Peter's "Hearken to my words. For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day" is rendered

Attentive listen to the Voice of Truth!
Nor think with wild Enthusiastic Rage,
Or Bacchanalian Revelry elate,
We now address this crowded Multitude

A first-century audience would suspect the Apostles of being drunk, an eighteenth-century audience would say that they were either drunk or enthusiastic. Parish guards them against both aspersions.

The same cool, plodding, sensible piety characterizes the anonymous *Messiah, A Sacred Poem* (Cambridge, 1763). This is simply a straightforward life of Christ in heroic couplets—an unremarkable but not absurd example of a long-lived poetic type.

More interesting in form, though hardly in content, is a perfectly regular Pindaric ode by "Theosebes," *Ode on the Incarnation of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ* (1744). "The noblest Entertainment of the Mind is certainly Poetry, and the noblest Species of that will easily be found to be

²⁴ Parish is not in *DNB*, and I know nothing about him. The title page describes him as an A.B. of Trinity College, Cambridge. Since he did not hold an M.A. in 1761 he would not have been eligible for the Seatonian Prize. His poem is not obviously incomplete, though it begins and ends with a row of asterisks.

Divine, which, at the same time, has the Misfortune to be most neglected This weak Effort therefore to rescue it from Contempt, cannot be unacceptable to the pious and candid Reader" Though workmanlike and reverent, the poem is quite devoid of wonder or joy The Incarnation is discussed as a sound and ingenious redemptive device, but its miraculous aspect is treated in a blurred, gingerly fashion The ode pattern is employed merely as a technical feat, with no attempt to achieve grandeur of emotion

Another anonymous poem, *A Philosophic Ode on the Sun and the Universe* (1750),⁸⁵ is an expression of that religious Newtonianism which is, rather surprisingly, not much cultivated by the poets of this chapter The author has thought "that the comprising a clear and succinct idea of the universe in a little poem, and interspersing some late discoveries therein, might be a means of gaining the attention of mankind, and of exciting them to serious contemplation and I should think it impossible for men, accustomed to such meditations, to open their eyes to let in the light, without letting in, at the same time, an awful idea of the majesty, goodness, and omnipresence of the great Creator, than which nothing can more effectively contribute to the eradication of the profaneness and debauchery, the impiety and immorality, with which this devoted nation is at present over-run "

This poem, however, could not have been a very powerful agent of moral and religious reform Vaguely and periphrastically, with sporadic attempts at eloquence, it describes the outlines of the solar system The only real information is given in the notes, on which the text becomes a feebly lyrical commentary The following lines are in a familiar vein

Newton, immortal Newton, rose,
This mighty frame, its order, laws,
His piercing eye beheld
That Sun of Science pour'd his streams,
All Darkness fled before his beams,
And Nature stood reveal'd

There is not a word of religion in the poem up to the perfunctory close

But let us not, in wonder lost, forget
The architect divine, all-good, all-wise, all-powerful,
Who spake to being this stupendous fabric,

To every world its proper beings gave,
With all that's needful to preserve and save

⁸⁵ The pattern is aa⁴b³cc⁴b³, with a concluding passage partly in blank verse and partly in heroic couplets

UNENTHUSIASTIC CHRISTIANS

To thee, the origin of all, the greatest, best,
Be all our love, our gratitude, our praise address!

Observe the suggestion that other worlds than ours have had their Saviours
There is no reason to doubt the piety of the author's motives, but the fact
that he regards this as a religious poem is depressing

The author of the foregoing poem, as we have seen, is alarmed by the
vice and impiety of the age. Many people regarded the earthquake shocks
which were felt in England in 1750 as divine warnings to turn from these
evils. Benjamin Stillingfleet (1702-1771)⁸⁸ addressed to "the giddy and
vicious Part of Mankind" *Some Thoughts Occasioned by the late Earth-
quakes* (1750). He does not, he insists, wish to derogate from the dignity
of science,

But there's a time for all things and when Death
And Desolation threaten all around,
'Tis better far to know the End, than Cause

Our sins are black enough to deserve the fate of Sodom. Widows and or-
phans "sigh in vain for justice." Not only infidels but even priests have
rebelled against God. We simultaneously worship luxury and avarice. Prosti-
tution and even viler sins run riot.

O Land
Of virtue once, how art thou now become
A prey to every Vice that bears a name!
And calls not this for Vengeance from above?
Yet still supinely in the very time
Of peril, all our follies we pursue,
And all our sins, and with presumptuous thought,
Or fix the dreadful day, or boldly cry,
It is not near. Pray Heaven it may not be!

Perhaps God's vengeance may yet be averted by heartfelt penitence.

The same theme is less artfully hymned in the anonymous *Verses on the
Late Earthquakes Address'd to Great Britain* (1750). England, personified,

⁸⁸ This grandson of the famous seventeenth-century divine, Edward Stillingfleet, was chiefly known as a botanist, but he was also an all-around dilettante. He played the cello and wrote some oratorios, including *Joseph* and *David and Bathsheba*. Philosophically he was a disciple of Hutcheson. His blue stockings, worn at Mrs. Vesey's soirees in Bath, gave rise to a famous term. In 1748 his *Essay on Conversation* was printed in Dodsley's *Collection*.

complacently accepts the frequency of earthquakes in Italy, land of bigotry and persecution

She [Italy] bids the Inquisition groan!
 She hears it with a Smile!
 She lights, with Extasy unknown,
 And views the shrieking Pile

But England had better look to her own sins

Own it! (but with a Blush) No Realm
 Like ours! so vile! so vain!
 See! to the Dunghill from the Helm
 Extends the moral Stain!

The shocks she has recently felt were "gentle warnings" which should be heeded while yet there is time

A more general rebuke to the age appears in a fifty-six page *Essay on Immorality* (1760) The unknown author grimly dedicates his work "To the Inconsiderate and Careless of the Present Age For the Serious Perusal of a Sober Hour" This smacks of Evangelicalism, but in his prose *Epistle to a Friend Necessarily preparative to the following Essay* he lays claim to the middle of the road "Far be it from me to adopt any of those ungrateful Tenets, which give Religion a gloomy Aspect, and blot the most amiable attributes of God, by destroying the innocent Enjoyments of His Creatures: The impious Excesses of the Libertine, and the irrational Moroseness of the enthusiastick Devotee, are equally to be avoided The wise and virtuous Man walks in the happy Medium, between these two criminal Extremes"

The structure of the *Essay* is very precise Part I finds the origin of evil in "the inherent Corruption of human Nature, the Carelessness of Education, and the Contagion of Example" Pope, Addison, and Young are incidentally praised as defenders of virtue in poetry The author then proceeds to castigate sexual immorality The effects of seducing virgins, he grants, vary with the social level of the victim

'Tis true we don't in lower Natures find
 That *keen* and *finer* Feeling of the Mind,
 Which claims in more exalted Souls a Place,
 And gives the pungent Sense of a *Disgrace*
 But such a Blot must wound a Husband's Eye,
 And hurt, in meanest Hearts, connubial Joy
 On ev'ry little Jarr, the Wife still hears
 Her *former Folly* sounded in her Ears

Part II deals severely with swearing, lying, gaming, and intemperance. The poet spurns the argument that reason is powerless to control the passions which underlie these vices

'Tis all Pretence, some Conflicts may ensue,
But Heav'n-fraught Reason will their Force subdue

That "Heav'n-fraught" is a more than merely decorative modifier of "Reason" is shown by a note "The Author is far from insinuating the Sufficiency of human Reason. And surely every one who reflects at all, must be fully convinc'd, that there is Nothing to be expected from it, as a moral Principle, without the Co-operation of Divine Grace"

We are shown a very circumstantial picture of a roomful of men after a drinking bout—vomiting, cursing, quarreling—and are reminded that all this is seen and heard by God. What will be the fate of these men on Judgment Day? What if you should die in the midst of such a debauch?

Part III, after rebuking slander, pride, and a miscellany of lesser sins, laments the decay of religion. For this writer, morality and religion are inseparable. A note declares "Whoever seriously considers the Nature of human Obligations, will find them founded on Religion, as a rational and invariable Rule of Action. The grand Design for which Man was created was the Attainment of eternal Happiness, and Obedience to the Commands of God, sanctify'd by the Merits of His Son, the Condition of obtaining it." Now that these principles are disregarded,

Virtue, in Man, is but an empty Name,
Whilst growing Vice appears his only Aim
Reason to raging Passion is resign'd,
And Conscience quits her Empire o'er the Mind
In vain she frowns, in vain she lifts her Dart,
Pleasure and Gain ingross the guilty Heart,

Religion now has lost her sacred Pow'r,
The Business only of a vacant Hour,
A Thing which Men of Spirit can despise,
Below the Notice of the Great and Wise,
Who scorn the Conduct of their Lives to draw
From that which keeps the *vulgar Herd* in Awe

The author of this *Essay* is not poetically gifted, and Matthew Arnold would find him deficient in sweetness and light. Nevertheless he is a completely honest man, capable of uttering unpalatable truths about an ugly

situation Whether in dealing with another subject he would show more awareness of the difference between religion and morality is perhaps doubtful He is also handicapped by his desire to revive Christianity and preserve "the happy Medium" at the same time But at least he knows that if his contemporaries are to regain goodness they must regain God

An example of more sprightly attempts to reform the times is seen in *Female Taste A Satire Inscribed to a Modern Fine Lady By a Barrister of the Middle-Temple* (1755) This is a general satire on the woman of fashion, but much of it pertains to religion The "modern polite lady" is advised to attend church, "When not enclin'd at home to sleep," in order to see and be seen She should not, however, permit herself to be scared by the parson's talk of hell let him save such tales for his elderly aunt As for promises of heaven,

You want no heaven, but that on earth,

The bliss, to which your soul aspires,
Is only found in Handel's wires,
When his soft fingers touch the strings,
When Low, or Beard, or Frasi sings

So if the preacher's theology is too grim, the fine lady should desert the church for the playhouse Observing his unpopularity, the parson will soon change his tune,

till heaven he grants,
For sinners made, as well as saints,
Which ne'er must shut its golden doors,
Against good-natur'd Christian whores,
The lewd, the shameless, the profane,
From Phillips, down to lady V[a]ne,
For mercy if at last they cry,
And rubbing hard their stubborn eye
Squeeze out one tear before they die,
They mount to bliss, when fate does call,
From cards, from brothels—sins and all

The barrister's desire to be witty is more obvious than his own spirituality He may be confusing a belief in the efficacy of genuine penitence with a merely sentimental universalism But in his day the latter was more preva-

lent than the former, and "good-natur'd Christian whores" were being assured of eternal bliss on terms which merited his satire

In this as in other periods, the Establishment was not much given to self-criticism. One of the ecclesiastical evils of the day, however, is assailed in *The Pluralist, A Poem, Or, The Poor Curate's Appeal to all Reasonable and well-disposed Christians By Philoethes*⁸⁷ (1769). This is a vigorous and rather well-written satire. Pluralism, the author avers, goes hand in hand with simony

By such a base monopolizing Trade
Of Benefits in sweet Conjunction laid,
Poor Curates truckle for a Crust of Bread,
And dull Religion droops her sick'ning Head

Philoethes heartily disapproves of Methodism, but with some insight he ascribes its rise to the clergy's lack of conscientiousness

How often o'er the sparkling Glass they stickle
To level Mountain-Predaching, Conventicle,
With Meetings, d-d Hypocrisies, and Nonsense,
That gain Advowson of the fickle Conscience,
Not dreaming such infectious Plagues commence
From their own Avarice, Pride, or Indolence

The subject matter of *The Pluralist* is similar to that of *The Curate* (1766), by the Reverend Evan Lloyd (1734-1776)⁸⁸. This cleric is so far from unworldly that he might with some justice have been assigned to Chapter II, but I spare him that disgrace because his satire, while essentially the work of a would-be wit, has the ring of sincerity

Ye pursy Rectors! overbearing crew!
Much hath the Curate to complain of you—
Much reason of complaint that you neglect
To give his worth, and office, fair respect,
Forget he is your equal, often more,
Unless you plume upon the Money score,
Ye wou'd be Masters, Tyrants, and wou'd have
The Minister of Jesus, be your Slave,
And, for the scanty pittance that you pay,

⁸⁷ *Sic*, but I suppose "Philaethes" is intended

⁸⁸ A Welsh parson who was educated at Oxford and became vicar of Llanvair in Denbighshire. Like Robert Lloyd, to whom he was not related, he was a friend of Wilkes and Churchill

Which scarce amounts to eighteen pence a day,
 Expect the Curate shou'd all drudg'ry do,
 On errands run, or black your Honour's shoe,
 In his Crape-Livery at your table wait,
 Clean knives and forks, but never sit to eat

In *The Powers of the Pen* (1766), a versified essay in literary criticism, this poet compliments Churchill and sneers at authors of Bible-paraphrases and psalmodies as dunces who try to get money by mangling Scripture. Dr Johnson is scolded for his strictures on Shakespeare, but is praised for revealing unnoticed beauties in the bard and for defending him against violation of the unities. Still more revealing of Lloyd's tastes is the fact that he makes Nature say of Rousseau

"In his Page I live,
 And all his Errors must forgive"—
 Then down her Cheek a silent Tear
 Stole, for she holds this Fav'rite dear,
 Which seem'd to say, "I wish that He
 Honour'd the Son of God, like Me!"

Evan Lloyd is a little too rakish and a little too sentimental to be a typical specimen of the unenthusiastic Christian of the period. His best-known production, *The Methodist*, will be discussed later.

This chapter could have been enlarged very greatly. There are scores of clerical versifiers like the Reverend William Langhorne (1721-1772),⁸⁰ who published a flat paraphrase of Job in 1760 and a flat paraphrase of the prophetic parts of Isaiah in 1761. Probably, however, the purpose of the chapter has already been too amply fulfilled.

Our conclusion at least may be brief. Granting the situation described in the opening paragraphs, the results are what might be expected. One finds a handful of secular poets who more or less frequently practise sacred poetry or who express religious ideas in poems not explicitly divine. A larger number, chiefly clerics, win prizes, round out their reputations, or satisfy some momentary urge by publishing one or two poems in which God is praised or sinful man rebuked. The satires which have been glanced at in the last few pages have, on the whole, more vitality than the devotional verse. But among writers whose work does not clearly reflect the influence of Evangelicalism or

⁸⁰ Elder brother of the better-known John Langhorne, who will appear in a later chapter.

sentimentalism, or a fusion of the two influences, not one religious poet of real merit flourishes between 1740 and 1780. To say that Harte, Glynn, and Porteous are the least contemptible of them is to damn the whole group. Imaginative response to traditional Christianity, which we traced in a descending curve through Chapters III, IV, VII, and VIII of Volume I, has dwindled almost to a state of atrophy.

The dullness and ineptitude of these writers is not, of course, to be ascribed solely to the feebleness of their religious experience. Even if moved by the ardor of a Saint Theresa, most of them would still be negligible as poets. Stronger feelings, however, would at least have given them more interesting faults. And while the 1740-1780 period is not poetically rich, it includes many writers of far greater ability than those which have been included in this chapter.

The poets of this group occupy a position in literary history which corresponds to their position in religious history. They are somewhat influenced by the traditional association of Milton with sublimity and by the success of Young in a novel type of divine poetry, but these trends seldom appear except in response to the stimulus of the Seatonian Prize. In all but the most superficial respects, preromanticism affects these sober Christians no more than it does the unbelievers of Chapter II. In a negative way, these poets remain loyal to the standards of neoclassicism. They have lost, however, those positive neoclassical virtues of order, elegance, precision, and conciseness which even minor poets of the Age of Pope not infrequently achieve. The poetry of the head is dying, while the poetry of the heart seems powerless to be born.

In religion, similarly, these writers maintain a tradition which is losing its power to give them deep and vital feelings. Yet, sometimes from mere conventionality and sometimes perhaps from higher motives, they refuse to be seduced by other varieties of Christian and non-Christian faith which many of their contemporaries find more stimulating. Their drabness is hence inevitable. They recognize an obligation to defend the reasonableness of Christianity, but they have lost their faith in reason. On the other hand, they have no clear sense of the distinction between the subrational and the super-rational, and they are desperately afraid of enthusiasm. Most of them would be glad to leave mysteries alone and preach a commonsense ethics, but the Deistic Controversy has taught them that they had better stick to Revelation despite the coldness and vagueness of their response to supernatural realities. Such is the poetry of the Church of Laodicea.

Can these bones live? Not *these* bones, alas, within the period which we are studying. In other bones, however, stirred more immediate potentialities of spiritual life, for during the years covered by this chapter of dullness there occurs a great revival of Protestant Christianity.

Chapter IV

THE EVANGELICAL MOVEMENT

BY 1740 THE TIDE OF EVANGELICAL AND "EXPERIMENTAL" CHRISTIANITY HAD begun to rise. Even in the Age of Walpole there were clerics and laymen who cultivated an unfashionably strict and earnest Protestantism, and who were ready to follow a leader bold enough to preach personal salvation through the Cross. The soil was ready for the seed. Latitudinarianism had shown itself powerless to check the spread of moral corruption. The intellectual champions of the Establishment, it was generally agreed, had crushed the wicked deists, but their arguments could not satisfy the deathless need to find goodness and peace through contact with supernatural verities. Meanwhile the breakdown of rationalism was enhancing the respectability of feeling as a guide to truth. The increasing dominance of the half-utilitarian, half-sentimental middle class encouraged a type of Christianity which was precise enough to be a practical remedy for contemporary evils and yet emotional enough to stir the heart.

Regarded as a single though highly complex trend, this revival of religion is best termed "the Evangelical Movement." The general movement may in turn be classified under two heads. Methodism and Evangelicalism proper. Through the period also run obscure currents of mysticism which, without constituting a distinct division of the movement, make some contribution to it. A detailed account of the Evangelical Movement would not be germane to the purpose of the present study. We must, however, ask how it is related to the general current of religious thought which moves from seventeenth-century Protestantism to eighteenth-century sentimentalism.

In this connection the Methodism of Wesley presents the most difficult problem. John Wesley cannot be described merely as a Puritan schismatic, but on the other hand he cannot be described as an Anglo-Catholic who was driven into separation by the malevolence of the Establishment. The conflict which runs throughout this great man's career begins in the Epworth parsonage. At the time of his birth in 1703 his parents had long been Anglicans,

but both had been reared as the children of Nonconformist ministers. A staunch Low Churchman and Whig under King William, the Reverend Samuel Wesley¹ was a staunch High Churchman and Tory under Queen Anne.² Though deeply immersed in politics, poetry, the compilation of a polyglot Bible, financial difficulties, and the begetting of twenty-one children, he strictly fulfilled his priestly obligations to his rough fen-dwelling parishioners and was cordially detested by them in return. A sincere but cool-blooded and mechanical sort of Christian, he possessed all the trappings of orthodoxy without its inward spirit. To his son he imparted his formal respect for the Church and its traditions, his Tory ideas of royal authority, and his autocratic temper, but though he influenced the boy's mind he never touched his soul.

In more essential respects John was his mother's child. Before her conversion to Anglicanism, Susanna Annesley had closely approached Socinianism. Rescued from that heresy, she unceasingly thanked God for her husband's impeccable orthodoxy. But within the protecting walls of Samuel's creed she cultivated a very individualistic, experimental, Protestant Christianity in which Holy Church counted for little. Well may she be styled "Mother of Methodism" the prayer meetings which she conducted at the rectory during Samuel's absences in London contained the germs of the movement. A born teacher and a religious genius, she made sure that her faith would be her son's.

As a student at Oxford, however, John was subjected to influences more complex than those which had surrounded him at Epworth. The Tory university threw its weight on the paternal side of the balance. But the young man was not content with merely external High Churchism. At this time he began to read mystics like Tauler, balancing such fare with more formal studies in apologetics and theology in general. Yet before long he came to see that his mother, as always, was right.³ Rationalistic hairsplitting and even mystical contemplation were less important than a saving faith at work in the active life. Hence he turned eagerly to more practical books of edification—*Holy Living and Holy Dying*, *The Whole Duty of Man*, and especially William Law's *Serious Call* and *Christian Perfection*.

Law's influence on Wesley has often been emphasized by those who like to interpret Methodism as a link between seventeenth-century Anglo-

¹ For an account of his religious poems, see *Religious Trends in English Poetry*, I, 112-16.

² He was associated with Sacheverell in ecclesiastical politics and was thought to have written the speech which that "Highflyer" delivered at his trial.

³ While at Oxford he steadily corresponded with her about his reading.

Catholicism and the Oxford Movement Law was of course a nonjuror, and at the outset of his career a devout Anglo-Catholic. He moved, however, from this standpoint to a soberly practical Christianity of a rather puritanical type and thence to a Behmenistic mysticism whose marked Quietist element has affinities with the thought of the Quakers.⁴ While his High Anglicanism never disappeared, it became so deeply overlaid first by practical and later by mystical Protestantism that the phrases "influence of William Law" and "influence of Anglo-Catholicism" are far from identical in meaning. Wesley paid little attention to Law as the High Church opponent of Hoadly, in later years he greatly disliked Law as a mystic, but at Oxford he admired the soberly improving Law who wrote *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life* and *Christian Perfection*.

When John was called back to his Lincoln College fellowship in 1729, after two years' service as curate in his father's second parish of Wroote, he found that his younger brother Charles had gathered about him a little band of pious fellow-students. Charles, a softer youth than John, needed the support of others to keep himself unspotted by the worldly life of Christ Church, but he had no talent for leadership and was glad to have his brother take charge of the group. The Club was simply a late example of those "Religious Societies" which had been rather common among young Churchmen in the reigns of William and Anne, but which had almost disappeared during the Walpole regime.⁵

The devotional meetings of the Oxford "Methodists" were not intended to be a substitute for the services of the Church. In all respects the members conducted themselves as loyal, devout, and rather "high" Anglicans. This, indeed, is the period during which John Wesley may most accurately be described as an Anglo-Catholic. He came very close to belief in transubstantiation. He received Communion weekly, and observed all the fasts and festivals. He approved of baptism by trine immersion, use of the mixed chalice, turning east at the Creed, abstinence on Wednesdays and Fridays, prayers for the dead, and auricular confession. On all these points, but especially in his devotion to the ideal of the primitive Church, he was much influenced by John Clayton, a fellow-member. The Catholicism of the "Holy Club" was genuine while it lasted, but it did not last long. In later life its members followed various paths. Clayton was exceptional in remaining

⁴ This development is traced by Stephen Hobhouse in *William Law and Eighteenth-Century Quakerism*, though without sufficient recognition of the enduringly Anglican element in Law's thought.

⁵ See J. S. Simon, *John Wesley and the Religious Societies*.

a nonjuring Anglo-Catholic Gambold and Ingham became Moravians, though the latter eventually founded a little sect of his own. Charles Wesley's loyalty to the historic Church outlasted John's, but he remained his brother's devoted though sometimes disapproving associate. A majority of the members, like James Hervey, made a thoroughly Protestant contribution to Evangelicalism. The history of Whitefield is familiar; he was not a precursor of John Henry Newman.

Though it might be argued that even in the Oxford days John Wesley was more interested in the *Primitive Church* than in the *Primitive Church*, he was certainly a High Churchman when he sailed for Georgia in 1735. He did not convert the Indians, but the Moravians placed his feet upon the path which was to lead to his own conversion. Some years before, his mother had been deeply impressed by accounts of the Moravian missionaries in Greenland. Through other missionaries of this communion, he was now to regain contact with Susanna's teachings. On returning home he sought light from Peter Bohler, Zinzendorf's representative in England, and associated with the Moravians of London. May 24, 1738, was the date of his conversion. The essence of the experience was a feeling of newness through intimate union with God. "I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for my salvation, and an assurance was given me that He had taken *my* sins, even *mine*, and saved me from the law of sin and death." He was confirmed in this faith by his visit to the Moravian communities of Marienborn and Herrnhut.

To understand the Moravians is to understand the religion which Wesley began to preach after his return from Herrnhut in the summer of 1738. They constituted the only branch of German Pietism which by this date had not collapsed into a half-pseudomystical, half-naturalistic sentimentalism. Though completely loyal to the doctrine of salvation by faith alone, they rejected the sterile scholasticism which had desiccated the Lutheran Church. Their creed was evangelical and their temper enthusiastic, but their ecclesiastical organization was rigid. Provincial and general synods were the real powers in the sect, but they had their bishops, priests, and deacons, and they regarded themselves as very primitive and apostolic. An intensely Protestant communion which retained something of a Catholic shape would enable Wesley to cultivate his new-found Protestantism without any conscious surrender of his Oxford Anglo-Catholicism. Surely he had discovered the *Primitive Church* at Herrnhut.

This stage, however, lasted hardly a year. All was not well with the Moravians in London and with the little quasi-Moravian religious societies

which had begun to take form under Wesley's influence. They were listening to outlandish eccentrics who descended from those "French Prophets" against whose enthusiasm Shaftesbury had recommended ridicule as the sovereign remedy. What was worse, they were reading Boehme, Bourignon, Guion. The mysticism thus generated ran counter to that practical, reforming, revivalistic piety which was dear to Wesley's heart. This emphasis on visionary contemplation, combined with the Moravian belief in the all-importance of conversion, made for a demoralizing Quietism. If the new birth was solely the work of God, what could the unconverted do to hurry the process? To engage in good works, to go to church, to receive the Sacrament, even to pray, was not only useless but wrong. One must simply sit still and wait for the stirring of the Spirit. Some of the converted, on the other hand, were being ensnared by Antinomianism. Their rebirth was evidence that they were predestined to salvation, and nothing which they did or failed to do could alter the divine decree. In not a few instances the temptation to make very free use of "the glorious liberty of the children of God" was irresistible.

Wesley's quest was always for a certain kind of religious experience, and he never hesitated to change his formal beliefs in order to find a theology which would support and not imperil that experience. Confronted by this crisis in the London societies, he suddenly broke away from Pietism. His half-favorable, half-suspicious attitude toward the mystics flared into strong opposition. As a Moravian he had disapproved of William Law's emphasis on the importance of "works." But in 1739 Law had published *Christian Regeneration*, his first definitely mystical book, and it was his mysticism which Wesley was henceforth to deplore. As for "works," the desire to combat Quietism caused Wesley to modify his solifidian position. Salvation without faith was of course impossible, but Christian conduct was both a preparation for the new birth and a witness of the fact that it had truly occurred. For similarly practical reasons, he rejected the doctrine of predestination. This shift to Arminianism may well have been rendered all the easier for being in some measure a return to the tenets of his High Church father. Its essential motive, however, was not a desire to revive Anglo-Catholicism but a desire to protect himself and his followers from the perils of Antinomianism.

Having rejected the Lutheran predestination of the Moravians, Wesley soon came in conflict with the Calvinistic predestination of Whitefield. With

much regret, but with complete firmness, he parted company from his associate on this issue. By 1741 the Methodists were divided into two camps, one Calvinistic and one Arminian. Thus at the beginning of the period covered by this volume Wesleyan Methodism had become a distinct entity.

It should be remembered, however, that the Methodists—I confine myself to the Wesleyan body—did not formally secede from the Church of England until 1795, four years after their leader's death. To the end of his days, John Wesley was an Anglican clergyman. He retained a good deal of his father's High Churchmanship, and a little of the deeper Anglo-Catholicism of his Oxford days. Then too, as a highly astute leader of men, he desired to preserve for his followers the social and political advantages of membership in the Established Church. But when that Church opposed the progress of his movement, he did not hesitate to adopt measures which inevitably pointed toward schism. His witty brother Samuel understood him well when he wrote "I am not at all afraid of the bishops' excommunicating my brother John, but I am very much afraid that he will excommunicate the bishops."⁶

In order to maintain the life of his societies, Wesley appointed lay readers who soon, with his sanction, became lay preachers. Characteristically, it was his mother who broke down his scruples against lay preaching. As the years went by, more and more bishops fulminated against the Methodists, more and more parish churches excluded them from their pulpits and from the Eucharist. Since very few ordained priests were associated with Wesley, and since there were no churches in some of the industrial regions where Methodists were most numerous, a great many of his followers were dependent upon the ministrations of the itinerant preachers. To Wesley the son of Samuel it was important that the preachers should be ordained, to Wesley the son of Susanna the exact manner of their ordination was not very material. In 1761, Bishop Erasmus of the Greek Orthodox Church, then travelling in England, was persuaded to lay hands on some of the preachers—a striking example of Wesley's desire to achieve Protestant results as far as possible by Catholic means. But this action was insufficient to supply the growing demand for a Methodist clergy. In 1784, Wesley himself ordained "elders" for America, in 1785, for Ireland, in 1786, for Scotland, in 1787, for England. These men were authorized to celebrate Holy Communion. It was also in 1787 that he abolished his rule prohibiting Methodist meetings during the

⁶ Quoted by Maximin Piette, *John Wesley in the Evolution of Protestantism*, pp. 330-31. For the poems of Samuel Wesley the younger, see *Religious Trends in English Poetry*, I, 295-302.

hours of regular Church services and registered his chapels as dissenting places of worship in order to avoid the fines to which unlicensed chapels were liable under the Conventicle Act

Three years earlier, he had not merely ordained ministers but had laid hands on two "superintendents" for the direction of the societies in America. Coke and Asbury were to perform the functions of bishops and were regarded as such by Wesley. His brother Charles was shocked into epigram:

How easily are Bishops made
By man or woman's whim
Wesley his hands on Coke hath laid,
But who laid hands on him?⁷

John, however, did not regard this astonishing act of Protestant Catholicism as schismatic. Since his Oxford days his conception of the Primitive Church had developed in accordance with the needs of Methodism. Stillingfleet's *Irenicon* had convinced him that no particular form of Church government was authenticated by Scripture, and Lord King's *Enquiry into the Constitution of the Primitive Church* had enabled him to reject the apostolic succession and the distinction between bishops and presbyters.

These steps toward Nonconformity, be it remembered, were not taken until over forty years after the beginning of the movement, and one may argue that Wesley was gradually forced to take them by the un-Christian hostility of the Establishment. It is not too paradoxical to say that in a communion which tolerated the son of Susanna he would in many respects have remained the son of Samuel. But did Wesley defy the Church of England because he wished to be more aggressively Catholic, or because he wished to be more aggressively Protestant? The question answers itself, but let us read a portion of the letter in which, on September 10, 1784, he defended his ordaining ministers for America. "I desired the Bishop of London to ordain only one, but could not prevail. If they [the bishops] consented, we know the slowness of their proceedings, but the matter admits of no delay. If they would ordain them *now*, they would likewise expect to govern them. And how grievously would this entangle us! As our *American* brethren are now totally disentangled, both from the State and from the English hierarchy, we dare not entangle them again, either with the one or the other. They are now at full liberty to follow the Scriptures and the Primitive Church. And we judge it best that they should stand fast in that liberty wherewith God has so strangely made them free."⁸

⁷ Quoted in M. L. Edwards, *After Wesley*, p. 123.

⁸ Quoted by Piette, *John Wesley*, pp. 388-89.

This is not exactly the spirit in which Newman withdrew to Littlemore. Even if the English bishops *would* ordain his preachers, even if there *were* time to have them do so, it would still be much more scriptural and primitive for the free American Methodists to have their own priesthood, ordained by the grace-conferring hands of their founder. One remembers that it was in the preceding year that the Episcopalian clergy of Connecticut sent Samuel Seabury to England to seek ordination as the first bishop of the American Church. His consecration by Scotch nonjuring bishops in 1784 may be contrasted with the obvious Protestantism of Wesley's action.

Fortunately for those who seek to interpret Methodism, Wesley himself was far more complex than the movement which he led. His followers did not lament their inability to practise the Catholic religion; their only complaint against the Church of England was its indifference or hostility to evangelical Protestantism. Even today, the Methodists retain a larger share of the authentic puritan spirit than any other denomination, and in this they are loyal to the traditions of their ancestors. The Arminianism of the eighteenth-century Wesleyan Methodists was merely a logical development of the liberal, democratic, and enthusiastic elements in the thought of the seventeenth-century Calvinistic sects, elements which in the eighteenth century were encouraged to develop by the growth of sentimentalism.

The temper of Methodism was a typically puritan mixture of grimness and gladness: man, utterly helpless and corrupt, washed whiter than snow by the Blood of the Lamb. For the Methodists the Atonement was absolutely central, the Incarnation comparatively unimportant. They were too practical and too suspicious of Antinomianism to scorn good works, but their recognition of the absolute primacy of justification by faith would have satisfied all but the most extreme Calvinist. They were also typically puritan in their view of conversion, or the "new birth," as the climax of Christian experience.

Methodism was highly emotional and introspective. The knowledge that one has been made whole by faith is the result of the immediate presence of the Holy Spirit within man's heart. It has nothing to do with worldly reason or learning. "The ultimate and incontrovertible evidence is the evidence of the believer's heart. Christianity is not founded on argument, but upon sentiment interpreted as God's voice speaking to the soul."⁹ It follows that, despite the systematic organization of the movement and the firm external discipline imposed by Wesley, Methodism was a highly personal type of

⁹ Leslie Stephen, *English Thought in the Eighteenth Century*, II, 415.

religion "All the doctrines of Methodism," says Edwards, "are a commentary on the worth and possibilities of the individual soul"¹⁰ That this individualism should have been combined with exaggerated reverence for a human leader once more bears witness to the essential Protestantism of the movement

Under Wesley, the itinerant ministers exercised a large amount of influence In order to find parallels for their characters and activities, one must turn back to the "mechanick preachers" of Bunyan's days Methodism was a religion of preaching and hymn singing It was also, of course, a religion of Bible reading Just as in the seventeenth century, however, the Scriptures were to be interpreted by that Inner Light which every man possesses

The Catholic sense of living in and through a sacramental system was quite foreign to the Methodists Their belief in the supreme importance of conversion naturally diminished the importance of baptismal regeneration How much Wesley retained of his "high" Oxford views on the Eucharist is a difficult problem which we need not undertake to solve, since in any case those views counted for little among his flock Those Methodists who valued the sacrament of the altar most earnestly would have described it as a symbolic memorial of God's love for man and man's love for God, and hence as a precious external aid in establishing an inward sense of union with Him No Methodist, however—and here Wesley himself may safely be included—would have regarded the Eucharist as the very core of Christian life The movement was thoroughly nonliturgical and nonritualistic

The Methodists saw themselves as a "peculiar people," a society of saints some of whom had attained "Christian perfection" and all of whom might hopefully aspire toward that state Despite their dread of Antinomianism a few of them used their freedom in a way which provided ammunition for their enemies, but the great majority rigorously shunned the learning, the arts, the vices, and even the harmless pleasures of *Vanity Fair*

Wesley's followers wished not to desert the Church of England, but to redeem it from within In the earlier stages of the movement they had little contact with Dissenters The practical disadvantages of Nonconformity were many Naturally also the Calvinism adhered to by the more rigid Dissenters divided them from the Arminian Methodists The Anglicanism of the Methodists, however, implied no deep devotion to the idea of Holy Church They did not conceive that their spiritual lives depended upon their membership in an eternal and universal society of believers—divinely instituted,

¹⁰ M. L. Edwards, *After Wesley*, p. 37

divinely guided, the mystical body of Christ. Their loyalty to the Church of England was merely loyalty to the form of Protestantism established by the laws of the realm. That loyalty, chiefly traditional and tactical, diminished as the hostility of bishops and parish priests increasingly demonstrated that the Established Church was not to be converted. As time went on, not a few Methodists found the chapel a more congenial place of worship than the church, and converts won over by the field preachers frequently joined Non-conformist congregations. Further confusion was caused by the influx into Methodist societies of Dissenters from industrial areas neglected by the Church. Long before separation was officially declared, Methodism had surrendered all claim to be in genuine spiritual communion with the Church of England and had become a Protestant sect in which the lineaments of seventeenth-century Puritanism are clearly discernible.

Evangelicalism proper may be dealt with more briefly, for no one seems unwilling to regard it as a revival—of course with modifications imposed by the eighteenth-century environment—of the deathless puritan element in the Anglican Church. The influence of William Law upon some of the early Evangelicals has often been observed, but as in Wesley's case, it was not the specifically Anglo-Catholic aspects of Law's thought which stimulated them. Such pioneers of the movement as Venn and Grimshaw were reared in the High Church tradition. This fact, however, indicates the feebleness of eighteenth-century High Churchmanship rather than its strength. Whenever it attempts to be more than externally correct, it loses itself in the general trend of Protestantism. The deep spiritual earnestness of the Evangelicals and their insistence upon several fundamental Christian doctrines were to form an important part of the heritage of the Tractarians. In itself, however, the movement was thoroughly Protestant in theology and temper.

During the period covered by this study, the Evangelicals were not a very large or powerful body. They did not really come into their own until the rise of industrial problems and the reaction against the French Revolution created a demand for their blend of practical piety, soothingly conservative liberalism, and humanitarianism. Before the secession of the Countess of Huntingdon's Connection in 1779 and of the Wesleyans in 1795 clarified the status of the Evangelicals, they did not form a definite religious body. All of them preached individual salvation through faith in the Cross, but they did so with greatly varying degrees of warmth. Their leaders represent diverse character types which are familiar to students of the seventeenth

century Romaine, the grave, precise, learned divine, Fletcher, the gentle, quixotic saint, Toplady, the acrimonious controversialist, Berridge, the holy buffoon. Some, especially in the earliest stages of the movement, were actively associated with the Methodists, others sympathized with their aims but shrank from their noisy irregular revivalism. Generally speaking, the Evangelicals may be described as more temperate and more cultivated than the Methodists. They addressed themselves to the bourgeoisie and even to the aristocracy rather than to the proletariat and were content to work through the parochial mechanism of the Church. One may also say that the Evangelicals were more purely English than the Wesleyans. The tinge of German Pietism which never quite disappeared from the Methodist societies was not a feature of Evangelicalism.

The beliefs of the Evangelicals were the same as those of the Wesleyan Methodists with the distinction that the former were Calvinists while the latter were Arminians. Thus although the Evangelicals were less schismatic in temper than the Methodists, their theology was more sharply in conflict with the dominant Anglican tradition and entailed a more obvious return to puritan ways of thought. Naturally therefore they cultivated close and friendly relations with the Dissenters and did much to rekindle their fervor.

Although Evangelical and Methodist leaders engaged in controversy about predestination, the modern student should not overemphasize the distinction between the Calvinism of the former and the Arminianism of the latter. The Methodist religious experience, as has already been suggested, included all that abasement, fear, hope, and final ecstatic assurance of freedom and power which are associated with Calvinism. Indeed, one might say that the Methodists were even more Calvinistic in *temper* than the Evangelicals, for Evangelical Calvinism, except when stiffened for polemic purposes, soon became rather cheerful and easygoing. "Basing their conception of religion, like Calvin, upon the total depravity of human nature, they used it to magnify the love of God in redemption, not to prove His justice in condemnation."²¹ In other words they made as little as possible of the idea that God has predestined many souls to damnation and as much as possible of the idea that He has predestined many souls to salvation. The view of conversion which the Evangelicals shared with the Methodists was also a preservative against despair. Toplady, the leading Evangelical champion of Calvinism in our period, writes: "'Tis true that none can come except as they are *drawn* by God's Spirit. But 'tis also no less true that those are drawn who

²¹ H. O. Wakeman, *An Introduction to the History of the Church of England*, p. 441.

come, and that all who come shall be graciously received"¹² This can only mean that conversion is proof of election The conversion must of course be genuine, but with such a prize in view who would question the authenticity of the experience except to enjoy the pleasure of scaring oneself a little before final assurance is accepted?

The Calvinistic Methodism set forth by George Whitefield is best described as left-wing Evangelicalism It operated on both sides of the vague boundary which separates extremely "low" Anglicanism from Dissent Among those less sophisticated Nonconformists who had not gone far along the road to Unitarianism his preaching helped to revive the old sectarian zeal Many of his Anglican disciples gravitated toward an amorphous body which took the name of Whitefield's pious and wealthy patroness The Countess of Huntingdon's Connection in turn gradually drifted beyond the limits of the Church of England into the Nonconformity which was its natural home, leaving behind it some of its more temperate members As is well known, Whitefield's eagerness to get money for his orphans developed in him an almost Buchmanite talent for appealing to the rich and powerful, and for a time many persons of quality attended his chapel or heard him preach in fashionable drawing rooms But only a few of the aristocrats who came to scoff remained to pray

Because of its emotional, introspective, and individualistic quality, and because of its ultimately liberal and humanitarian implications, the Evangelical Revival—here I use the term in the broadest sense—has sometimes been associated by scholars with the Romantic Movement or at least with preromantic sentimentalism Here there is need for discrimination Undoubtedly the Revival constitutes one aspect of that heightened trust in the validity of feeling which is partly a cause and partly a result of the breakdown of rationalism But as compared with the pure cult of sentiment Evangelicalism is plainly a retrograde tendency in the history of our theme It asserts very precise Christian beliefs, it stresses the innate depravity rather than the innate goodness of man, it tolerates no confusion of God, man, and nature, it is resolutely supernaturalistic In short it is a revival, in response to special needs and opportunities, of that puritan Protestantism from which, as we saw in Volume I, the preromantic cult of sentiment emerged during the 1700-1740 period

Hence in the period now under discussion, the vertical diagram with

¹² Quoted in Thomas Wright, *Augustus M Toplady and Contemporary Hymn-Writers*, p. 242

which the reader of Volume I is familiar must be supplemented by a horizontal one. Beside the sentimentalism which descends from broken-down seventeenth-century Puritanism must be placed the restored Puritanism of the Evangelical Movement. Those students who have observed the sentimental potentialities of Evangelicalism lend support to the thesis of this study. Quite naturally Evangelicalism contains the seeds of sentimentalism, for it is the aged father of sentimentalism restored to youthful health and vigor. Not that either father or child is fully aware of the kinship. To some extent the Evangelical Revival was a reaction against sentimentalism, a return to something more definite and practical and firmly rooted than the vague deistic talk about nature and universal benevolence which seemed powerless to cope with the moral crisis. On the other hand, the continued growth of sentimentalism in the 1740-1780 period was partly a reaction against Evangelicalism: several poets were shocked even by the comparatively soft and cheerful Calvinism of the Revival.³⁸ But the situation is too complex to justify the assertion that the relationship between father and son was consistently hostile. As usually happens in the family circle, outward antagonism was tempered by a good deal of inward sympathy. Some of the poetry of the period illustrates the evangelicalizing of sentimentalism or, more frequently, the sentimentalizing of Evangelicalism.

³⁸ This point is well stated and illustrated by L. B. Whitney, *Primitivism and the Idea of Progress in English Popular Literature of the Eighteenth Century*, pp. 83ff.

Chapter V

THE SAINTS AND THEIR FOES

THE INWARDNESS OF METHODISM FOUND ITS MOST SATISFYING OUTLET THROUGH the hymns of Charles Wesley. These may so often be regarded as personal religious lyrics, and good ones, that here I have been tempted to abandon my policy of excluding hymnody from the scope of these studies.¹ To a less extent, the same remark applies to "Rock of Ages" Toplady, John Newton, and a few other Evangelical or Nonconformist emulators of Isaac Watts. The temptation has been resisted, however, chiefly because Dr. Louis F. Benson, in *The English Hymn*, has provided a thorough treatment, both factual and critical, of Methodist and Evangelical hymn writers.²

Leaving hymns out of account, poetical reflections of Methodism in the narrower sense are practically nonexistent. The movement appealed chiefly to the subliterate and was imbued with deep distrust of worldly arts. To write divine poetry not intended for the worship of the society was a waste of precious time and therefore might even be regarded as sinful. John Wesley's own attitude toward literature, though grudging and suspicious, was much more civilized than that of his disciples.³ In 1744, at the request of the Countess of Huntingdon, he published *A Collection of Moral and Sacred Poems from the most Celebrated English Authors*, which shows a rather wide acquaintance with sacred and seriously ethical poetry. A list of the chief authors included⁴ is of some historical interest. Milton (two passages from *Paradise Lost*), Sir John Davies (two selections from *Nosce Teipsum*), Herbert (three rather unfamiliar poems), Cowley (four selections), Ros-

¹ As in Vol. I, my scheme permits me to glance at the hymns of poets like Cowper, who also wrote nonliturgical religious poetry.

² See also Henry Bett, *The Hymns of Methodism in Their Literary Relations*.

³ Interesting as they are, Wesley's literary opinions and his manifold activities as editor, expurgator, and reviser cannot be discussed here. See T. W. Herbert, *John Wesley as Editor and Author*, and Louis B. Wright, "John Wesley: Scholar and Critic," *South Atlantic Quarterly*, XXIX, 262-81.

⁴ Spenser he regretfully omits "because scarce intelligible to the Generality of Modern Readers."

common, Yalden, Congreve, Dryden (four selections), Norris, Pomfret, Prior (three poems, including *Solomon* entire), Watts (thirteen poems, chiefly hymns), Mrs Rowe (twenty-four poems), Parnell (four poems), Pope (eight poems, including *Essay on Man* entire),⁵ Young (four selections, including copious excerpts from *Night Thoughts*), Broome, Fitzgerald (five selections), Dyer, (*Grongar Hill*), Swift (*To Stella On Her Picture*), Hughes (three poems), Samuel Wesley the elder, Samuel Wesley the younger (about thirty-five poems), John and Charles Wesley (twenty-five hymns) ⁶ How appreciatively this collection was received by the faithful I cannot say In any case so few of them were inspired to write divine poetry of their own that in the first part of this chapter I have found it impracticable to make any hard-and-fast distinction between strictly Methodist verse and verse which reflects the very similar feelings of pure Evangelicals and of Evangelical-minded Dissenters The second part of the chapter will show how Methodism fared at the hands of its foes

According to the *Dictionary of National Biography*, James Kershaw's⁷ *The Methodist Attempted in Plain Metre* (Nottingham, 1780) was "not approved by Wesley, who feared it might deter the elect from perusing more edifying works, and determined henceforth to exercise a censorship over methodist publications" The author's motives, however, were thoroughly unworldly He describes this poem of 134 pages as "a small rustic performance" on a subject which "is worthy the pen of a Milton or a Young" Rustic it certainly is, but it is clear and simple, in no way extravagant or offensive, and rather ingratiating in its artless sincerity

Kershaw's theme is what God has done through "our common Father in Christ, John Wesley" He begins with a quite accurate account of Wesley's life up to his conversion, then describes the spread of Methodism in England, Scotland, and Ireland This second part grows monotonous because of the

⁵ But Wesley's notes on the *Essay* include such comments as "Is not Revelation left out of the Account here?" and "A fine Thought! But is it consistent with Scripture? I am afraid not"

⁶ For all eighteenth century poets in this list except Young, who is treated in the present volume, see the Index of Names of Vol I The reader may be reminded that John Wesley himself wrote many hymns, several of them translated or adapted from the Moravians See J T Hatfield, 'John Wesley's Translations of German Hymns,' *PMLA*, XI, 171-99

⁷ 1730?-1797 Converted from Socinianism by Henry Venn in 1761, he became an itinerant Methodist preacher who often accompanied Wesley After 1770, however, he devoted himself chiefly to writing and to selling quack medicines He produced tracts, a work on redemption, and an essay on the Book of Revelation

constant repetition of the same narrative pattern, but the humble poet's love of England would not have been despised by Drayton

Pursue the road to *Thirsk* and *Allerton*,
On either hand the Lord has wonders done

Sail down the *Ouse* by *Selby* to *Swinfleet*,
Near which some rapid rolling rivers meet
There trees of righteousness each bank adorn,
Quite cross the plains from *Pocklington* to *Thorne*,
And spread and flourish like the fields of corn

Kershaw's comments on Wesley's life and on the history of the revival perfectly represent the governing ideas of Methodism

How blind is man, 'till Jesus gives him sight!
How dark the world without the Gospel light!
Till *Inspiration* lights dark Reason's Eye,
The things of God, Reason can never spy

Englishmen needed a new Reformation, for they were estranged from God by their reliance on merely human reason

While reason boasted her superior sway,
Had she not banish'd Gospel-truths away?
While Science bloom'd, and lib'ral Arts improv'd,
And fancy o'er the fields of Nature rov'd,
While nat'ral knowledge to perfection grew,
How few once thought of being *born anew*!

The validity of the Methodist view of conversion is defended by an uncompromising appeal to the Inner Light

'Tis ask'd, "How can we *know* our sins forgiven?"
'Tis answer'd by a witness sent from Heaven
This witness, true, is of a noble kind,
More than by vision or by voice we find
The mind alone its secret whispers hears,
When it dispels our guilty doubts and fears,
And with our spirit its joint witness bears
The mind of man, with consciousness endu'd,
What passes there by inward light is view'd
But who can see what passes in another?
The Eye of God, and certainly no other
And thus this witness felt by inward sense,
Each only knows by sound experience

The process, then, is a private transaction between the mind of God and the mind of the individual. That the person thus illumined may find it difficult to maintain a saving sense of the nothingness of human nature does not occur to James Kershaw. It is enough for him that Methodism *works*. To the opponents of field-preaching he retorts that "Christ himself irregular did rove." And can we condemn the ministry of His modern imitators while the rough colliers of Newcastle "shout redeeming love through earth and sky"?

How many souls, since first this tree took root,
Have angels pluckt like ripe autumnal fruit?

Shine heavenly sun, emit thy genial heat,
Descend prolific dews, the sun beams meet,
Let heavenly breezes fan the spreading tree,
And O, dear Saviour, *make them blow on me*

One feels that Wesley erred in silencing this quiet, loyal, pious voice

The question of predestination divided the followers of Wesley from those of Whitefield and from the Evangelicals. Some of the controversial writing devoted to this theme was written in verse, of which a single specimen will suffice. The anonymous author of *The Nature and Fitness of Things*⁸ may be an Evangelical, but he is probably a Whitefield Methodist.⁹ This assault upon Wesley's Arminianism, though bitter, seems motivated by a genuine concern for Calvinist orthodoxy rather than by personal malice. The only important argument is that the Arminian doctrine implies a limited and imperfect God, for if an omnipotent Deity desired that all men should be saved, how could any man be damned? The Wesleyan system gives man the power to thwart the will of God.

Shall Wesley sow his hurtful Tares,
Or scatter round a thousand Snares,
Telling how God from Wrath may turn,
And love the Soul he thought to burn,
And how, again, his Mind may move

⁸ *The Nature and Fitness of Things, or, The Perfection of God, A Standing Rule to Try all Doctrines and Experience by In a Poem Humbly offered to the Consideration of Mr John Wesley and his Followers With other Occasional Poems* (2d ed., London, 1752). The date of the first edition is unknown to me. The "other occasional poems" are a short funeral elegy on the death of the author's son and an epitaph on his two brothers.

⁹ Since the Evangelicals were not active in this controversy before the 1760s, a poem of this sort which reached a second edition in 1752 is more likely to represent Whitefield's group.

To hate, where he has vow'd to love,
 How all Mankind he fain would save,
 Yet longs for what he cannot have,
 Who looks for Fruit from every one,
 Where he no Seeds of Grace hath sown,
 Expecting Thorns and Thistles might
 Yield Grapes and Figs to his Delight,
 Industrious thus to sound abroad
 A disappointed, changing God

Any attempt to question the "aweful Truth" of Calvinism is popish blasphemy, and the all-sufficient answer is "It is his Will it should be so"

In the eyes of the world, the most substantial person to be considered in this chapter is the Reverend Thomas Morell (1703-1784), A M, D D, F S A, F R S He was a classical scholar, a botanist, a historian, and an editor of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* (1737) and of Spenser (1747) Among his neighbors at Turnham Green, Middlesex, were Thomson, Hogarth, and Garrick Another friend was Handel, for several of whose oratorios he wrote the libretti I know of no evidence that he was actively associated with the Evangelical group, but his verses express a piety at once so strict and so emotional that it seems proper to number him among the saints

He at least illustrates the unbroken survival of the type of mind which responded to the Evangelical Movement, for as early as 1732, while a fellow of King's College, Cambridge, he published *Poems on Divine Subjects, Original and Translated* Out of 237 pages devoted to translations, 120 are occupied by versions of Vida's "hymns" to the three Persons of the Trinity Morell adds copious notes which display a good deal of theological learning

Morell's own poems fill only 29 pages They deal earnestly but crudely and tritely with such subjects as *Sin, Repentance, Death, Hell, and Heaven* A *Prefatory Copy of Verses on Divine Poesy* declares that

'Tis the Divinity within, that fires
 The raptur'd Mind, and worthy Thoughts inspires,
 When pious Bards the Praise of God rehearse,
 And sing the Giver with the Gift of Verse

He aspires to follow "at humble Distance" in the footsteps of Cowley, Milton, Waller, Norris, Samuel Wesley the elder, Watts, Prior, Broome, Pope, and Young Unfortunately, like too many religious people, he is emotional without being in the least imaginative and does not come within hailing

distance of even the least of these bards His piety, furthermore, is not of an amiable cast He is too much disturbed by other people's irreligion to derive much joy from his own faith Hell, he insists, is to be taken seriously

'Tis not all Cant, or sounds of empty Air,
That from the warning Pulpit wounds the Ear,
The very Word of Heav'n's Almighty Lord,
That pierceth deeper than the two-edg'd Sword,
Threatens a living Lake of sulphurous Flame,
Ever to feed upon th' immortal Frame,
Unable to consume its lasting Prey,
Or grant that wish'd-for Blessing, *not to be*³⁰

Such is the fate of Spinoza and Hobbes, such will be the fate of Woolston unless he repents

In 1745, when he publishes *Hope A Poetical Essay on That Christian Grace*,³¹ Morell is an older man and a more competent writer of verse, though still not a poet He now has before him the example of Young's *Night Thoughts*, and he imitates the apologetic portions of that work rather faithfully His purpose is to instill heavenly hope by showing the futility of worldly hope, but his negations are more zestful than his affirmations He is not very convincing when he argues that man's desire for eternal life is proof of immortality, but he enjoys scaring unbelievers with an allusion to *Hamlet*

But fear they not indeed, the Senseful Dreams
That in this fancied Sleep of Death *may* come?
Ask the Physician, ask the Bosom Friend,
Or wait the tell-tale Hour, when Conscience, rous'd
By the stern Threats of double-darted Death,
Before them spreads the well-kept Register,
And something they do fear,—even Hobbs did fear

One could quote conventional expressions of a less negative viewpoint from Morell, but on the whole he is too eager for the damnation of others to leave us with a favorable impression

The affirmative side of Evangelicalism appears much more strongly in *The Saviour* (1745), by the Reverend J Grigg³² He depicts the chief scenes

³⁰ *On Hell*

³¹ The Argument covers three books, but at this time only the first book was published, and apparently Books II and III never appeared

³² Not in *DNB*, and I know nothing about him except that the British Museum Catalogue lists three sermons of his The title page of *The Saviour* reads "In Two Books," but the second book seems never to have been published

in the life of Christ with comments on their significance. The style resembles that of Young in his more sanguine moments, and there are a few suggestions of the influence of sentimentalism. Thus Grigg emphasizes the fact that the good news of the manger was told to humble shepherds,

as they their Flocks attend,
While deep in Grandeur sunk, or deep in Down,
The Monarch shines, or sleeps, from Heav'n estrang'd,
No Seraph near his Palace or his Couch
Blest rural Life! where humble Swains, content
Thro' Nature's Scenes, like Enoch, walk with God

But his Preface rebukes "those People who talk so bigly of *Nature* as the beneficent Discoverer of those Principles which were darted into their *own* Minds by a Divine Revelation—a Revelation which as unnaturally they condemn as *Nature* they adore." He is thoroughly sound on the essential Evangelical point—sin washed away by the Blood of the Lamb

What monstrous Evil! Evil infinite
Has Guilt that cost the Son of God so dear!
Yet is that Guilt atton'd let Saints weep on,
But Tears of Grief be turn'd to Tears of Joy!
Mercy and Justice mingle Beam with Beam,
The more illustrious each, O! Scheme divine!
A God of Pardon, and a God that's just!
And for a Saviour's Sake a Sinner sav'd!

Though no poet, Grigg writes like a cultivated and intelligent as well as a pious man

As an inmate of the "Collegium Insanorum" at St Alban's, William Cowper was not only temporarily restored to sanity but was convinced of the truth of Evangelical Christianity by Dr Nathaniel Cotton (1705–1788).²⁸ Some will have it that the doctor imbedded more deeply the arrows which had pierced the stricken deer, others insist that he provided the victim with his only refuge from agony. In any case Cowper was lastingly grateful to Cotton for not brushing aside the spiritual problems which beset him at St Alban's. "How many physicians would have thought this an irregular

²⁸ Little is known of his early life. After studying medicine at Leyden he kept the asylum at St Alban's from 1740 to his death. He was noted for humane treatment of his patients. Besides his poems, which were collected and published in 1791, he wrote copiously in prose on religious and moral subjects.

appetite, and a symptom of remaining madness! But if it were so, my friend was as mad as myself, and it is well for me that he was so"¹⁴

Cotton was remembered by Cowper as "truly a philosopher every tittle of his knowledge in natural subjects being connected in his mind with the firm belief of an omnipotent agent"¹⁵ In agreement with this assertion are the doctor's lines, obviously based on Addison's best-known hymn

The azure fields that form th' extended sky,
The planetary globes that roll on high,
And solar orbs, of proudest blaze, combine
To act subservient to the great design
Men, angels, seraphs, join the gen'ral voice,
And in the Lord of Nature all rejoice¹⁶

Usually, however, Cotton's faith seems quite independent of natural philosophy, and he has no use whatever for the sort of reason that rejects the "pard'ning grace" of Christ

What tho' the sages of the Earth
Proudly dispute this wondrous birth,
Tho' learning mocks Salvation's voice,
Know, Heav'n applauds your wiser choice¹⁷

Cotton's hymns and Psalm-paraphrases must not detain us His epitaphs, especially *On a Lady, Who Had Laboured under a Cancer*, are rather sombre, and in general the dominant mood of his more definitely "divine" poems is one of pious gloom relieved by faith in the Atonement He can amuse himself by composing a *Rebus* on the word "tombs" Van Tieghem discerns the influence of *Night Thoughts* in *Death*, the last of a series of *Visions*, and in *The Night Piece*, which he well describes as "un hymne de confiance et d'espoir inspiré par la foi, dans un cadre sépulchral"¹⁸ But the latter poem, as the title might have suggested, closely imitates Parnell's *Night-Piece on Death*, though the theme of melancholy banished by piety is given a more evangelical twist

Jesus, to thee I'll fly for aid,
Propitious sun, dispel the shade,
All the pale family of fear
Would vanish were my Saviour here

¹⁴ Letter of July 4, 1765, to William Hayley

¹⁵ Quoted from Hayley's *Life of Cowper* in Chalmers, XVIII, 5

¹⁶ *To the Rev James Hervey, On His Meditations*

¹⁷ *An Ode on the Messiah*

¹⁸ Paul Van Tieghem, *Le Prérromantisme*, II, 120

Death is also more obviously related to Parnell's poem than to Young's
The lines

This path the best of men have trod,
And who'd decline the road to God?

pay sincerest flattery to the earlier poet's

Death's but a path that must be trod,
If man would ever pass to God

Nevertheless Cotton was personally acquainted with Young and was one of two physicians who attended him in his last illness¹⁹

Dr Cotton was also an admirer of James Hervey, who was inspired

To form the taste, and raise the nobler part,
To mend the morals, and to warm the heart,
To trace the genial source we Nature call,
And prove the God of Nature friend of all²⁰

Though an Anglican, the poet was on friendly terms with Dissent. He corresponded with Doddridge, and his *Sunday Hymn* is described as written "In Imitation of Dr Watts"

Cotton writes a considerable amount of religious verse, but most of his poems are piously ethical rather than "divine." In a special group of six fables, each is headed by such a precept as "The folly of passing a hasty and derogatory judgment upon the noxious animals of the creation" or "That the complaints of mankind, against their several stations and provinces in life, are often frivolous, and always unwarrantable." He greatly fancies himself as a guide of youth. *Visions in Verse, for the Entertainment and Instruction of Younger Minds* is a series of trite little allegories on *Slander, Pleasure, Health, Content, Happiness, Friendship, Marriage, Life, and Death*. A favorite theme is the importance of making proper use of time²¹

He entertains the quite mistaken notion that he has sacrificed poetic fame in the cause of virtue

Perhaps if Int'rest held the scales,
I had devis'd quite different tales,
Had join'd the laughing low buffoon,
And scribbled satire and lampoon,
Or stirr'd each source of soft desire,
And fann'd the coals of wanton fire,

¹⁹ W. Thomas, *Le Poète Edward Young*, pp. 206-07

²⁰ *To the Rev. James Hervey, On His Meditations*

²¹ See *Time, To-Morrow, Lanes Under a Sun-Dial*, and *An Ode on the New Year*

Then had my paltry Visions sold,
 Yes, all my dreams had turn'd to gold,
 Had prov'd the darlings of the town,
 And I—a poet of renown!

It is well, however, that he stuck to the only sort of verse that he was qualified to write. Chalmers is correct in saying "He scarcely ever attempts imagery, or description, and no where rises above a certain level diction adapted to the class of readers whom he was most anxious to please." Yet he sometimes displays symptoms of literary sophistication, as in *An Invocation of Happiness After the Oriental Manner of Speech*, where he imitates the Song of Solomon in "poetic" prose: "My fair-one is meek and humble, she dwelleth among the cottages, she tendeth the sheep upon the mountains, and lieth down amidst the flocks. The lilies of the field are her couch, and the Heavens her canopy." He believes that Shakespeare was nature's favorite pupil,²² and he writes *To Morrow* in unnaturally Shakespearian blank verse. As we have seen, he is aware that Parnell has effectively expressed some of his own moods. Not the *Night-Piece on Death* but the *Hymn to Contentment* helps him in advising children to emulate the lark:

His morning hymns, his mid-day lays,
 Are one continued song of praise
 He speaks his Maker all he can,
 And shames the silent tongue of man.²³

The appreciation of eighteenth-century poetry calls for a charitable sense of the relativity of literary values. Nathaniel Cotton is a consummate artist compared to the humble psalmodist William Tans'ur or Le Tans'ur (1699?–1783).²⁴ His *Heaven on Earth* (1738)²⁵ paraphrases in hymn stanzas the Book of Proverbs and the Song of Solomon. These are set to familiar hymn tunes arranged for part singing. Let us imagine a congregation warbling:

The Watchmen that do wander in
 The City saw me there

²² *Slander*

²³ Compare Parnell's

They speak their Maker as they can,
 But want and ask the tongue of man

²⁴ *DNB* records few definite facts about him. In 1737 he began to publish a long series of psalmodes interspersed with popular treatises on harmony. "The last forty years of his life were spent chiefly at St. Neots, where he was a stationer, bookseller, and teacher of music."

²⁵ *Heaven on Earth. Or, The Beauty of Holiness In Two Books. Containing, I The Whole Book of the Proverbs of King Solomon, Composed in English Verse, And Set to Musick, II The Song of Songs, which is the Song of Solomon Together with various Hymns, Anthems, and Canons With Instructions to the Musick and Explanatory Notes on the Whole*

ists Thomas Gutteridge of Shoreditch, a teacher of shorthand, was barely literate, but between 1741 and 1762 he published separate elegies on various heroes of Dissent. He outdid himself, however, in *The Universal Elegy, Or a Poem on Bunhill Burial Ground* (n.d.),²⁸ in which he memorializes the occupants of twenty-four of the graves. Here is his tribute to the most eminent of the group:

The Pilgrim Bunyan, here he lies at Rest,
And waits the Resurrection of the Blest,
Similitudes he'd draw, then finely dress,
His Genius runs through his Pilgrims Progress,
Profit and Pleasure in the Work combine,
And spangled Metaphors they give a Shine,
The Trope's pursued, the Allegory's Form,
And tell the Tinker's Rhetorick was inborn
The Kettle of the Gospel here he rung,
And as he beat Jesus he sweetly sung,
Free Grace, Free Grace, abounding was his Cry,
To Chief of Sinners, even such as I

The Reverend Mr. Joseph Hussey was less notable for "spangled Metaphors" than for his erudite thoroughness in the pulpit:

His Learn'd Soul wise Sentiments let fall,
He'd show the Word in its Original
He'd criticise upon a Phrase a Little,
And show the Import of a Particle,
The Adjuncts of the Subject he'd display,
And tho' the Text was dark he'd break the Day,
And show the shining of a Gospel Ray

The only woman thus honored is Dame Mary Page Dying, she

Was ask'd if Thoughts of future World gave Joy,
With Soul serene, she cry'd out, *Aye, Aye, Aye*

²⁸ *The Universal Elegy, Or a Poem on Bunhill Burial Grounds In Which Are hinted at many of the Dead, and particularly Describ'd the Characters of* [24 persons named in alphabetical order, all but three of them ministers] *All Alphabetically Digested, and humbly Address'd to all those who design to be there, and to the Surviving Relatives of the Dead who lie there Interr'd*. This book may be earlier than 1740. Of the few persons mentioned by Gutteridge whose dates of death are known to me, none died later than 1726. But since the group includes figures as early as Bunyan this incomplete evidence proves nothing. Gutteridge chiefly wishes to honor such ornaments of Queen Anne Nonconformity as Daniel Williams (d. 1716), Samuel Pomfret (d. 1722), and Matthew Clarke (d. 1726). Since his separately published elegies began to appear in 1741, *The Universal Elegy* seems to belong in the present volume. It is quite unrelated to the anonymously edited *Inscriptions upon the Tombs, Gravestones, etc. in the Dissenters Burial Place near Bunhill Fields* (1717).

This sweet Hint, in Funeral Sermon rung,
 Flow'd from a gracious Heart, and Lady's Tongue,
 Under her Sorrows she did never faint,
 But always was the Lady and the Saint

But the temptation to quote further from Gutteridge must be resisted. Here in the heart of the eighteenth century survives the voice of lower-class seventeenth-century Dissent, still ready to break out with

I do believe in God alone,
 Likewise in Reeve and Muggleton

The Nonconformists of our period, however, had access to a much more elevated tradition of sacred poetry than that represented by Gutteridge. The theory and to some extent the practise of Isaac Watts²⁷ go marching on. One of Watts's younger friends and correspondents was the Baptist minister Daniel Turner (1710-1798).²⁸ Except for a batch of epitaphs and a translation of a Latin Psalm-paraphrase by Buchanan, his *Divine Songs, Hymns, and Other Poems* (1747) consist entirely of hymns. Possibly his *Poems Devotional and Moral* (1794) contains a larger amount of nonliturgical religious verse, but its date is so late that I have not examined it.

That Turner is of some interest as a critic may be learned from his *Devotional Poetry Vindicated, in Some Occasional Remarks on the Late Dr Samuel Johnson's Animadversions upon that Subject in his Life of Waller To Which is Added A Short Essay on Genius* (1785). The first of the two essays comprising this volume follows closely in the path of Watts. Poetry and religion are intimately related. "There is scarcely a Temple, or any Place sacred to Devotion in the whole World, where the Voice of Poetry is not heard." In heaven, "as the Sacred Writings inform us, *poetical Devotion* makes an essential Part of the Employment and Felicity of its blessed Inhabitants." And on earth, though the art is now grossly debased, "yet its natural, and unbiased Tendency, is certainly towards its Celestial Source." Surely Dr Johnson is not decrying the *inspired* poetry of the Scriptures, and "Have we not many pieces of *uninspired* Poetry, even of the *contemplative and devotional* kind, which both delight and profit us?" What the Biblical

²⁷ See I, 120-34.

²⁸ After a period of mingled schoolteaching and occasional preaching he served as minister of Baptist congregations at Reading and later at Abingdon and published a number of sermons and devotional works.

Poetry does in the highest Degree, merely human Compositions may do in a lower "

To Boileau's argument that the truths of Christianity are not susceptible of poetic ornament he answers that while our religion is not adapted to "the frippery Gayeties of mere Wit and licentious Fancy," it is certainly adapted to "the more solid Ornaments, of the truly sublime and pathetic kind " Fumbling manfully toward the distinction between imaginative beauty and externally imposed decoration, he adds "There is a certain kind of Enthusiasm, or extraordinary elevation of Sentiment, that naturally fires the Mind, fills it with bold Metaphors and lively Epithets, and leads it into a peculiarly harmonious Arrangement of the Forms of Expression, which affords every kind of necessary decoration, entirely independent of the Reveries of Fiction " Since this enthusiasm is preeminently associated with religion, "divine" subjects are conducive to poetic sublimity Here is precisely the view not only of Watts but of Dennis and Blackmore²⁹

Turner's *Short Essay on Genius* reveals with unusual clarity the links which connect this theory of divine poetry with the preromantic cult of originality and with the early stirrings of transcendentalism Genius is defined in almost Coleridgean terms as "the Soul's Power of Thinking, not only *for* but *from* itself, with a Kind of Sovereign Freedom and Independence, except on the Being that inspires it " Although Turner's conception of genius is thoroughly religious, he is forced to admit that "Religion does not depend on *Genius*, but on something more common to us all, even the Grace of God in Jesus Christ But even Religion has been often greatly assisted by this natural gift of God Our first emersions from Popish Darkness and Superstition were, under the divine Providence, much indebted to the singular Courage and Knowledge of Men who dared to think out of the common Track, that is, to the energy of that *pious Genius*, which distinguished our first Reformers And who were the greatest Patrons of our Civil and Religious Liberties in the Ages following, but the Raleighs, the Sidneys, the Boyles, the Lockes, the Addisons, Men of eminently distinguished Genius " Divine poetry, original genius, the creative power of the soul, the spirit of the Protestant Reformation, and Whiggery—this Baptist preacher has summed up a great deal which pertains to our subject³⁰

²⁹ See I, 183-89 and 189-201

³⁰ Turner does not mention Young's *Conjectures on Original Composition*, a more famous example of the same complex of ideas He may have been influenced by it, but Watts, perhaps supported by Dennis and Blackmore, could have supplied all the authority he needed

Another warm admirer of Watts was the Reverend Thomas Gibbons (1720-1785),⁸¹ a leading Independent minister of London. Though by no means a remarkable poet, he was much more successful than Turner in applying the Wattsonian theory to actual composition. He began to write verse at the age of sixteen,⁸² but there is no important difference in content or quality between *Juvenilia* (1750) and *The Christian Minister* (1772). In both volumes his purpose is

To show my Brother-Criminals their Doom,
And how from endless Ruin they may rise
Through Jesus' Death, and Triumph o'er the Tomb,
To heir with him th' unperishable Skies⁸³

Fittingly "presented to the Reverend Isaac Watts" is *A Poem* expressing the familiar ideas on the religious origins and ends of poetry. Here Milton is lauded as the redeemer of the corrupted art, but

In the same Cause, and touch'd with heav'nly Fire,
See Watts appears, and strikes the sounding Lyre,
Watts, who with Pindar's Extasy of Rage,
To Virtue kindles a licentious Age

A prose letter included in the 1772 volume pays a friendly though more reserved tribute to old Blackmore.⁸⁴ James Hervey, who shows us the hand of God in nature, also receives his praise.⁸⁵ *Juvenilia* is dedicated to the Countess of Huntingdon. "Your Catholic" Regards to the Followers of our blessed Master, and your ardent Zeal and Endeavours for the Promotion of vital and experimental Religion, are perhaps unequalled by any of your Ladyship's Distinction." The influence of Young, with whom Gibbons was acquainted, is at work in *A Morning-Thought*, where the poet reproaches himself for his insensibility to the approach of death

And is my Soul so near her Change of Worlds?
So near the Verge of Hell, or Port of Joy?
Why then so smother'd round with Toys of Dust?

⁸¹ Besides a host of prose writings on religious subjects, he published *Rhetoric* (1767), *Female Worthies* (1777), and *Memoirs of the Reverend Isaac Watts* (1780). I pay no attention to his *Hymns Adapted to Divine Worship* (1769). Louis F. Benson says that as a hymn writer Gibbons 'took his impulse from Watts, without sharing Watts's gift' (*The English Hymn*, p. 212).

⁸² Preface to *Juvenilia*

⁸³ *The Tears of Friendship*

⁸⁴ To Luke Wayman, M.D. July 14, 1761

⁸⁵ To the Reverend Mr James Hervey, A.B. on his Meditations

⁸⁶ "Catholic" probably alludes to the fact that Lady Huntingdon's seminary at Trevecca prepared clergy for both the Nonconformist and Anglican ministries.

Why thus alive to ev'ry Vanity?
 Yet deaf, and dull, and dead, when Grace divine
 Would rouse my Heart, and summon me away,
 On Flames of Love, and Faith's triumphant Wings,
 To take the Earnest of the future Skies

For Gibbons, Protestantism and loyalty to the House of Hanover are inseparable. *A Poem on the Rebellion in 1745* insists that the victory of the Pretender will mean the return of Popery

Again the Abbeys, half-consum'd by Time,
 Or levell'd in the Dust, shall lift on high
 Their tow'ry Heads, and in their lazy Wombs
 The Monks shall kennel, there in mut'ring Pray'rs,
 Or planning murd'rous Guilt, or secret Lusts,
 Shall waste their Days, and riot on the Toils
 Of the poor Hind

With Protestantism, of course, political liberty will also disappear⁸⁷

Like most pious dissenting poets, Gibbons specializes in epitaphs and elegies. While these effusions are always definitely religious, he plainly desires to elevate them to the literary level. Dead children are well suited to this purpose, for in writing about them one can be both edifying and pretty. A seraph gently chides Florella for questioning Providence on the death of her five-year-old brother

Of vernal Blooms you cull'd the Best,
 And plac'd the Beauties in your Breast,
 And can'st thou blame the Sov'reign Pow'r
 Who snatch'd from Earth his Fav'rite Flow'r?⁸⁸

On an Infant that expired in its Birth is equally ingenious but more direct and honest

Sweet Babe, whose unpolluted Sight
 Has never drunk the mortal Light,
 Sweet Babe, that in a glad Surprise
 Hast found thy Being and thy Skies

Through a long Maze of various Woe
 Thy Parents wander here below,
 But thou hast scap'd the dang'rous Road,
 Pass'd from thy Mother to thy God

⁸⁷ The spirit of Protestant Whiggery appears also in *On the Reverend Mr Crookshank's History of the State and Sufferings of the Church of Scotland*, which condemns Charles I and Laud and hails 'the great Nassau'

⁸⁸ To Mrs Rachel Shuttlewood, on the Death of her Brother Mr Anthony Shuttlewood, aged five years

Elegies on adults, of course, are also abundant. Raphael, Watts's guardian angel, appears in person to describe the talents and virtues of the departed poet.³⁹ *A Poem on the Death of Mr William Beldam, Junior* eschews didacticism in favor of a lyrical description of the young man's entrance into heaven

Angelic Flames encircling round,
With ardent Joy, and Awe profound,
Their Hallelujahs sung,
Unbodied Saints tun'd high their Strains,
And o'er the wide rejoicing Plains
The loud Hosanna rung

Florio drunk in the vast Delight,
And now he stretch'd his final Flight,
And join'd th' unnumber'd Throng,
The Seraphs shouted high their Joys,
And Saints essay'd to try their Voice
In more exalted Song

"Several deceased Friends" are handled all at once in *The Tears of Friendship*.⁴⁰ The omnibus sets out in an atmosphere of gloom

The Ev'ning now, in sable Mantle clad,
Comes forth, effacing the Remains of Day
By fast Degrees, and Darkness deep and sad
O'er Nature spreads her universal Sway

It is raining, a screech owl is heard, bats flit through the "dank Shades" "What Time like this so suited to my Woe?" But a seraph appears, saying that the deceased are happy now and that if the poet follows their godly example he too will be saved. At this both nature and the poet shake off their melancholy

The young gay Sunbeams twinkle in the Dew,
Nature delighted wakes from her Repose,
My sacred Toils with Transport I renew,
And with redoubled Zeal my Bosom glows

To anyone interested in minor curiosities of literary history this blend of the old Puritan funeral elegy with the influence of Gray is a treasure

Is Gibbons a genuine lover of nature, or does he, being poetically am-

³⁹ *An Elegiac Poem, to the Memory of the Rev Isaac Watts*

⁴⁰ *The Tears of Friendship, an Elegiac Ode sacred to the Memory of several deceased Friends, and particularly the Rev Benjamin Grosvenor, D.D. who departed this Life, Aug 27, 1758, in the 83rd Year of his Age*

bitious as well as pious, attempt to adapt his faith to a contemporary fashion? The two possibilities are not mutually exclusive. In any case he writes a considerable amount of Christian nature poetry. *The Wish*, one of the numerous progeny of Pomfret's *Choice*,⁴¹ asks for a small, comfortable house on the Thames with a pleasant garden. There should be plenty of books, including those of Watts and Hervey, and a sufficiency, but by no means an excess, of food. Here the poet will spend quiet, studious, pious days. In a more lyrical treatment of a similar theme he declares that such retirement encourages both poetic and religious inspiration. Elsewhere he uses a river to symbolize various desirable spiritual states. The last stanza, for example, reads

Th' unclouded Azure of the Sky,
And the Sun's broad resplendent Eye
Emblaze the limpid Stream
Thus o'er my Soul may Grace divine
In its unsully'd Beauty shine,
And ever dart its Beam.⁴²

Surprisingly like some lyric by the edifying, elderly Wordsworth is *The Lark*

See on his beating Pinions rise
The little Soarer to the Skies,
Sweet Raptures swell his Throat!
Sublime in Clouds he tow'rs away,
And hails the op'ning Lids of Day
In many a tuneful Note

The bird, remaining quietly in its nest throughout the day but aspiring toward God at sunrise and sunset, typifies the life which Gibbons wishes to lead

The Shining Hours of Time that run
'Twixt the gay Morn and setting Sun,
I, like the Lark, should spend
And the sweet Train of studious Cares
Should fill the current of my Years
Till Life shall find its end.⁴³

Though Gibbons, as we see, is quite ready to use some of the literary fashions of his day as a vehicle for his religious interests, there is no evidence

⁴¹ For earlier examples of the influence of this poem see "Pomfret" in the Index of Names of Vol. I

⁴² *To the Reverend Mr Philip Furneaux Meditation by a River*

⁴³ Other religious nature poems by Gibbons are *A View from Hay-Cliff*, *On the Singing of a Robin*, *Meditation in a Garden by Moonlight*, *Creauon*, *A Sacred Pastoral*

that his sturdy Protestantism is much contaminated by the cult of sentiment. A possible exception is *To Robert Cruttenden, Esq., Friendship*, which expresses the idea that God created man because

Friendship prevail'd upon his Breast,
As if in boundless Bliss unblest,
Till Souls, where his bright Image glow'd,
Were kindled to commune with God

But this rather tender-minded conception of a sociable, lonesome God does not appear elsewhere in Gibbons's work. After all, he would wish us to remember him as the author of *The Christian Minister*, the long blank-verse poem which gives the 1772 volume its title. This treatise on the art of being a dissenting pastor is addressed to "Philander"—James Watson, formerly Gibbons's pupil, who has recently entered the ministry. "Epistle the First," of course, treats "The Duties of the Pulpit." Philander should keep a just balance between the "Terrors of the Law" and the "Mercies of the Gospel" and should

bear in Mind
That not from Socrates, or Antonine,
Or Epictetus you derive your Creed,
Or own them for your Masters, but avouch
Immanuel, who reveal'd the Laws and Grace
Of Heav'n, your only Teacher and your Guide

For know the Gospel is a Structure rais'd
On natural Religion, but that shines
With such bright Privilege, and that's enrich'd
With such transcendent Motives to inspire
An holy Temper, and an holy Life,
As unassisted Reason never knew

There is advice on tropes and metaphors, which are by no means to be despised, and even on elocution and gesture. One likes Gibbons's warning against the practise of praying with one eye on the congregation,

As if you rather meant t' instruct, than pour
Your Soul into the Bosom of your God

In the second Epistle, Philander's studies are considered. As befits the author of a treatise on rhetoric, Gibbons recommends the study of that art. But the prime requisite is a knowledge of the Scriptures in the original tongues. The ancient philosophers are also to be read. Despite their inadequacy—

here Gibbons enlarges upon the warning given in his first epistle—they are useful “in shewing the Correspondence between Natural and Revealed Religion” The Fathers are likewise recommended, especially those

Who flourish'd nearest to the golden Age
Of Christ and his Apostles, ere the Fogs
Of false Philosophy, and vain Concerts
O'er Christianity had spread their Gloom,
And dimm'd their genuine Lustre

Philander will also read such champions of the Reformation as Luther, Melancthon, Beza, and Calvin Even more useful, however, will be the works of a long list of seventeenth and eighteenth-century divines These are chiefly Nonconformists, but Tillotson is hailed as a foe of atheism and popery The aid of the physico-theological tradition represented by Boyle, Ray, and Derham is not to be despised Much may be learned, however, from simpler souls

Like some untutor'd Thrush, whose Warblings yield
Joy to the Swain, who sows or reaps the Plains,
Bunyan his wild Notes pours, and charms our Souls,
Such is the Force of Nature, and of Grace!

The substitution of Bunyan for Shakespeare in this Miltonic allusion is arresting, equally so is the implied harmony of nature's gifts and God's

“Epistle the Third” instructs Philander “On the Conduct of his Life” The advice is what might be expected Much stress, however, is laid on the importance of preserving health through outdoor exercise In a note the poet says that he visited Edward Young in 1759 and found him hale and hearty at the age of seventy-six because of his fondness for horseback riding But such worldly amusements as playgoing and cards are condemned In more important matters Gibbons regards charity as no less desirable than zeal

Let ev'ry Christian, of whatever Name,
Howe'er divided in inferior Points,
By you be ever lov'd, be ever priz'd
Be infinitely more, my Friend, concern'd
For Men's Salvation than t'imprint your Faith
In all its Circumstantial on their Souls

Probably no Methodist or Evangelical would disapprove of *The Christian Minister* One cannot say, however, that the poem is fully representative of the Evangelical Movement It lays no heavy emphasis on the Atonement,

does not mention conversion, is friendly to learning and science, and regards natural religion as insufficient rather than dangerous. On the whole it exemplifies the tradition of earnest, cultivated, and rather moderate Nonconformity which descends from the learned and sober divines of the Queen Anne period. Other poems of Gibbons, as we have seen, indicate that this tradition is not impervious to the themes, forms, and rhetorical graces of contemporary secular poetry.

Another dissenting versifier who displays some literary self-consciousness is Anne Steele (1717-1778), daughter of a Hampshire timber merchant who was also a Baptist lay preacher. It is recorded that her life was blighted by the drowning of her fiancé a few hours before the wedding, but I shall not undertake to prove that this tragedy determined the nature of her work. In any case she always had delicate health and "ever wrote—though with a lively sense of the beauties of nature, and a joyful gratitude for the divine bounties,—yet with a deep sense of the transitoriness of all things earthly, and an earnest desire for the promised rest of the saints."⁴⁴ At last she went to that rest with a calm joy, on her lips the words, "I know that my Redeemer liveth."⁴⁵ She had never started at hearing the deathwatch beetle—merely one of many reminders of her soul's eventual escape from the bonds of flesh.

Must die! Is this a melancholy sound,
When endless life begins its blissful round?
Thy poison'd arrow, death, wounds not the heart,
Which in the Saviour's blood can claim a part.⁴⁶

Anne Steele has strong and genuine religious feelings, and she is not without ability to express them. Though by no means a genius, she may be described in athletic parlance as the holder of two records: she is the best purely devotional poet of her sex in the 1740-1780 period, and she is the all-time champion Baptist hymn writer of either sex. Her hymns, several of which are still sung, were in their own day immensely popular in America as well as in England. Watts's hymns had expressed thoughts shared by all the congregation, but Miss Steele, "exchanging the common ground for the feminine standpoint" gave us the Hymn of Introspection and of intense devotion to Christ's person, expressed in fervid terms of heightened emotion. Composing under the shadow of affliction and ill-health, she added to

⁴⁴ "Memoir of 'Theodosia,'" by John Sheppard in *Hymns, Psalms, and Poems By Anne Steele*, p. ix.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. xiii-xiv.

⁴⁶ *The Death-Watch*

English Hymnody the plaintive, sentimental note"⁴⁷ Her subjectivity suggests a comparison with Charles Wesley, but she is temperamentally more like Elizabeth Rowe Since she practised hymnody chiefly as a vehicle for her personal emotions, no attempt will be made to distinguish between her "hymns" and her "poems" Usually, though not always, her lyrics in simple quatrains are intended to be hymns

Theodosia—for like Mrs Rowe she affected a pen name—sees the goodness of God in nature

Lord, when my raptur'd thought surveys
Creation's beauties o'er
All nature joins to teach thy praise,
And bids my soul adore⁴⁸

Yet it is by no means on the natural revelation, but on *Redeeming Love* that her religious experience depends

On thee alone my hope relies,
Beneath thy cross I fall,
My Lord, my life, my sacrifice,
My Saviour, and my all

Indeed, only those who have found God *above* nature can hope to find Him *in* nature

Blest with his smile, the soul can see his hand
In every varying scene⁴⁹

That she is much less interested in nature than in the supernatural is seen in *The Elevation*, a kind of serious evangelical parody of Casimir's much-imitated ode, *E rebus humanis excessus*⁵⁰ She admires the beauty of the stars, but not with Newtonian awe

Let the sons of science rove
Through the boundless fields of space,
And amazing wonders trace,
Bright worlds beyond those starry flames,
My nobler curiosity inspire

To soar "beyond the skies" one must follow "A path proud science never found"—the way of the Cross As the ode proceeds she permits herself a

⁴⁷ Louis F Benson, *The English Hymn*, p 214

⁴⁸ *Meditating on Creation and Providence*. See also *The Voice of the Creatures, Rural Meditation*, and *A Rural Hymn*, which is imitative of Thomson

⁴⁹ *Devotion*

⁵⁰ See "Casimir" in the Index of Names of Vol I

glimpse of heaven but rebukes her own attempt "Those awful glories to explore" On this side of the grave there is a humbler but a surer way of finding "The heavenly friend who died for me"

Yet in the sacred word,
I may behold my Lord,
In those celestial lines
A ray of glory shines,
Pointing upward to the skies,
Scenes of joy, though distant, rise,
To faith, and hope, and humble love reveal'd

Nevertheless she desires a more immediate contact with divinity than the Scriptures will provide Only one hymn, and that a feeble one, attempts the sacramental approach⁸¹ An unfulfilled longing for mystical contemplation is, on the other hand, a persistent theme She wants to be a mystic, but is hindered by *The Fettered Mind*

The mind was form'd to mount sublime,
Beyond the narrow bounds of time,
To everlasting things,
But earthly vapours cloud her sight,
And hang with cold oppressive weight
Upon her drooping wings

The most tragic feature of this captivity, she says elsewhere, is the dull, sluggish way in which we accept it⁸² She accuses herself of *Cold Affections*

Jesus demands this heart of mine,
Demands my wish, my joy, my care,
But ah! how dead to things divine,
How cold my best affections are!

'Tis sin, alas! with dreadful power,
Divides my Saviour from my sight,
O for one happy, shining hour
Of sacred freedom, sweet delight⁸³

Another important feature of her work is her habit of treating familiar eighteenth-century ethical topics in the light of evangelical Christianity Whereas Gibbons occasionally seems to be compromising with literary fashions, Miss Steele is always trying to redeem them for the Lord's work. The comforts of *Content* flow from those heavenly realms which are revealed to

⁸¹ *Communion with Christ at his Table*

⁸² *Captivity*

⁸³ See also *Desiring a Taste of Real Joy and Divine Contemplation*

the mind only by faith, not by worldly reason The source of *True Happiness* is not mere virtue but religion Her description of the truly happy man concludes

Released from the sorrows of time his glad spirit
 Shall leave its weak partner, and joyfully soaring,
 The promis'd possession begins to inherit,
 With angels adoring

He knows that his body, the grave now detaining,
 In Jesus' bright image hereafter arising,
 Shall surely rejoin him, no sorrow remaining,
 Corruption despising

Then with heaven's fair armies in triumph ascending,
 Partake of delights ever new and abounding,
 Enraptur'd before the bright throne lowly bending,
 Salvation resounding!⁵⁴

Similarly, although rural retirement is dear to her, the contemplation which she praises is always definitely Christian

Friends and soothing praise apart,
 Solitude unveils the heart,
 When the veil is thrown aside,
 Can we see a cause for pride?

Contemplation, sacred guest,
 Now inspires the ardent breast,
 Spreads her wings, and bids the mind
 Rise and leave the world behind

Treasures of eternal joy
 Now her great pursuit employ⁵⁵

In short it would be difficult to find a writer of the period whose thought is more consistently Christ-centered than Theodosia's All that she fundamentally has to say is voiced in *The Humble Claim*

To thee my heart, dear Saviour, I resign,
 Thy grace, with sweet constraint can make it thine!
 Vile wretched heart! thy powerful grace alone
 Can cleanse, renew, and make it all thy own

⁵⁴ Observe the unusual stanza pattern, which Elizabeth Barrett Browning might have admired It is used also in *Retirement*

⁵⁵ *Solitude* See also *Retirement*

O let thy love, thy all-prevailing love,
 Possess my heart, and every fear remove!
 Then shall my soul assert her joyful claim,
 Great Mediator, in thy worthy name!

A close parallel to Anne Steele is provided by Susannah Harrison (1752–1784) Born of a very humble family, she became a domestic servant at the age of sixteen, but taught herself to read and write while in service Her favorite books were the Bible and Watts's hymns In her twentieth year spinal trouble made her a complete invalid She wrote hymns to relieve her pain and poverty, and in 1780 Dr John Conder edited for her a volume with the startlingly unusual title, *Songs in the Night*⁵⁶ This book, now so completely forgotten that it is not even mentioned in Benson's history of *The English Hymn*, went through no less than sixteen editions between 1780 and 1823⁵⁷ But Dr Benson's omission of it is quite understandable, since the hymns were seldom used liturgically and were apparently not designed for that purpose

Miss Harrison's hymns rather often allude to her physical affliction She wonders why God has given her such pain

What is it that provokes thine Ire?
 Is there some Idol I must yield?
 Sure in my Heart some base Desire,
 Some dreadful Evil lies concealed

She wishes that she might find this unknown "beloved Sin" and conquer it "Lest it should sink my Soul to Hell"⁵⁸ But her greatest fear is that in her misery she may doubt God's love for her

If thou wilt help me to believe,
 I can this bitter Draught receive,
 Tho' mix'd with Wormwood and with Gall,
 My Soul in Faith can drink it all

Thou know'st I am but feeble Dust,
 Too apt thy Goodness to mistrust,
 But let not Darkness veil my Mind,
 Let me not think my God unkind⁵⁹

⁵⁶ *Songs in the Night, By a Young Woman under deep Afflictions "Who giveth Songs in the Night" Job xxx v 10*

⁵⁷ To buy the invalid's hymns would of course be an act of charity, but this motive would affect only the three editions which appeared before her death in 1784

⁵⁸ *Hymn XXVI*

⁵⁹ *Hymn CII*

Such thoughts she is able to subdue by a faith which is somewhat more technically theological than Anne Steele's.⁶⁰ Her solifidianism is very marked

No more of Works I vainly boast,
Nor so employ my Tongue,
Jesus alone is all my Trust,
Free Grace my only Song

'Twas not in me to seek his Face,
Nor did I ask his Love,
Till He by his all-powerful Grace,
First drew my Thoughts above⁶¹

Another characteristically Evangelical trait is her emphasis on *personal* salvation

All Glory to His Name
Who hung upon the Tree
Let the whole Earth repeat the same
He bled and died for Me!

To the hymns which comprise the main body of *Songs in the Night* are appended sixteen *Meditations in Blank Verse*, inspired, I believe, by Elizabeth Rowe's *Devout Soliloquies*.⁶² They treat less lyrically and less interestingly the same themes as the hymns. One of them thanks God for shielding her

From all th' abounding Errors of the Age,—
From all the conscious Pains that DEISTS know,—
Thou shalt preserve me from th' ARMINIAN's Shame,
From all the Horrors ANTINOMIANS feel —
From all the Terrors that Thou hast prepar'd
For ARIAN Monsters, and SOCINIAN Fools⁶³

Less pharisaical are the lines which conclude the volume

Jesus, with all the Ardor of my Soul,
I now invite and call Thee to my Breast,
O hear my earnest Cry, and haste away!
Skip o'er the horrid Mountains of my Sins,
Leap o'er the Hills of my Unworthiness,
Like Lightning let thy Presence all destroy,
O come, and with Thy Glory fill my Soul!

⁶⁰ Curiously enough, I nowhere find an explicit statement of Miss Harrison's denominational connection. So far as one can judge from her work she might belong to any evangelically Calvinistic body. But since John Conder, the editor of *Songs in the Night*, was a Congregationalist, one may hazard the guess that she was a sheep of that fold.

⁶¹ *Hymn LXVI*

⁶² See I, 135

⁶³ *Meditation X*

Such are the songs which God gave to Susannah Harrison in the night of her pain

The ten poets⁶⁴ whom we have examined illustrate the continuance of the puritan spirit throughout the eighteenth century and the heightening of that spirit in the Evangelical Movement. They are not exclusively clerical: besides two pious women, four of the ten are laymen. Their positions on the social scale range from the proletariat to the upper middle class, from the almost illiterate Gutteridge of Shoreditch to the learned and comfortable Morell. On the whole it is a rather humble group. Gibbons, Turner, and Dr. Cotton are substantial and cultivated men who would nevertheless be ill at ease in the presence of the great; Kershaw is first a lay preacher and then a vender of quack medicines; Tans'ur a shabby teacher of music; Susannah Harrison an invalid housemaid. These writers are not much concerned with politics, but occasionally they display Whiggish sympathies. Of Toryism there is not a trace.

Four poets whom the reader might expect to find in this chapter have been reserved for treatment as a separate group. Smart, Byrom, Young, and Cowper. Deprived of these major figures, and of writers who confine themselves to liturgical hymns, the singers of experimental religion are not impressive either singly or collectively. More diligent sifting of the dustbins would add to their numbers but not to their lustre. The Methodists make practically no attempt to produce nonliturgical divine poetry. The Evangelicals are more ambitious in this respect but only a little more successful. Thanks to the heritage of theory and practise received from Watts, the Non-conformists seem able to distill a modicum of poetry from evangelical Christianity. But even the best of them—Gibbons, Anne Steele, and Susannah Harrison—have little to give the critic in search of enduring values. None of these pious versifiers has found a place in the literary history of the eighteenth century. Except when it allies itself with sentimentalism, the Evangelical Movement is cut off from the main stream of poetry.

The Evangelical Revival was detested by the man of the world, the scholar, and the safe-and-sane Churchman. Since the enemies of a movement naturally attack its most extreme manifestations, Methodism provided the best target, when a more moderate Evangelical was to be abused, the term "Methodist" was still convenient. The eccentric and even unsavory conduct

⁶⁴ I leave out of consideration the anonymous author of *The Nature and Fitness of Things*

of a few saints furnished a pretext for the most extravagant accusations against the whole body. The real reason for the unpopularity of the Methodists, however, is that they disturbed the peace and quiet of England by preaching ideas in which sensible folk had ceased to believe: human corruption, the Atonement, conversion, the indwelling Holy Spirit, Christian perfection, grace abounding to the chief of sinners.

Such notions seemed hardly less absurd to Bishop Warburton than to David Hume. Since the days of Samuel Butler, puritan enthusiasm had been continuously reprehended—sometimes solemnly, more often satirically.⁶⁵ The literary tradition was maintained even when enthusiasm had almost reached the vanishing point, just as the Scriblerus Club wits continued to abuse the seventeenth-century virtuoso long after that type had become an anachronism. But now the fanatical spirit which had wrought such havoc a century ago appeared to have revived in good earnest, and the familiar devices of anti-Puritan polemics were brought to bear upon it with renewed zest. The Methodists, it was said, had no business to remain within the Church of England, for they were no better than the old sectarian fanatics. Like their ancestors, they were politically subversive. If not insane, they were half-mad with melancholy. Their enthusiasm presumed an infallibility which related them to the foul superstitions of popery. They were hypocrites who justified their lusts by a presumption of spiritual liberty. They were vulgar, ignorant, noisy, and conceited. Their leaders wanted only power and wealth. Promptly in 1739 appeared a pamphlet, *Enthusiasm no Novelty. Or, the Spirit of the Methodists in the Year 1641 and 1642*, with the motto, "There is no new Thing under the Sun." The anonymous editor says in his Preface: "I here present the Reader with a Specimen of that Enthusiasm, which in 1641, and the following Years, pour'd forth a Deluge of Misery and Confusion over the whole Kingdom, tho', at its first Appearance, the Marks of a *New Regeneration* were, at least, equally visible in the Extempore Prayers and Sermons of those Times, as they are in the Field-meetings on Kensington-Common, etc., in these our own Days. I flatter myself, that every sober Person, who seriously observes, from this small Sketch, to what a Height of Extravagance, the Overflowings of the private Spirit has formerly rose, will be fully convinced how careful we ought to be in guarding against an Illusion, which, as it has done before, may very possibly again hurry its Admirers into Practices of the most Pernicious Consequence." The text of the pamphlet consists wholly of fanatical prayers

⁶⁵ See "Enthusiasm" in the Index of Topics of Vol. I

which present trivial matters to God's attention with offensive intimacy or which are politically subversive. There is nothing to indicate where the material comes from or whether it is genuine. The editor provides footnotes from *Hudibras*⁶⁶

In our period, when "enthusiasm" was anything more than a vague term of abuse it meant an excessively inward, individualistic, and emotional type of religious experience—"the Overflowings of the private Spirit," as the editor of *Enthusiasm no Novelty* expresses it. Methodism was sufficiently tinged with this quality to provide an opening for its enemies. The revivers of puritan ardor were assailed by men who were themselves end products of the decay of Puritanism. The campaign against the saints, as we shall now see, was waged in verse as well as in prose.⁶⁷

For the wits of Chapter II, Methodism was fair game. To express one's scorn of religion by sneering at zealots whom even ostensibly religious people detested was safe and pleasing. Christopher Anstey amuses himself with the traditional association—at least as old as Burton—of enthusiasm and sexuality. The "Postscript" of Letter VII of *The New Bath Guide* tells how

Tabby from scruples of mind is releas'd
Since she met with a learned Moravian priest,
Who says, There is neither transgression nor sin,
A doctrine that brings many customers in.⁶⁸

A fellow lodger of the Blunderheads in Bath is a Methodist preacher

Whose name's Nicodemus, but some call him Roger,
And Roger's so good as my sister to bump
On a pillion, as soon as she comes from the pump,
He's a pious good man, and an excellent scholar,

⁶⁶ Among more formidable and better-known attacks on Methodist enthusiasm are Theophilus Evans's *The History of Modern Enthusiasm from the Reformation to the Present Times*, 1752; Thomas Green's *A Dissertation on Enthusiasm*, 1755; Bishop Lavington's *The Enthusiasm of Papists and Methodists Compared*, 1749; Bishop Warburton's *The Doctrine of Grace, or The Office and Operation of the Holy Spirit Vindicated from the Insults of Infidelity and the Abuses of Fanaticism*, 1762; *A Fine Picture of Enthusiasm*, 1744 (John Scott's *Essay on Enthusiasm*, reedited by the Socinian minister Caleb Fleming with his own "Application of the Picture to Methodism"), and Richard Graves's amusing anti-Methodist novel, *The Spiritual Quixote*, 1744. For scholarly treatment of enthusiasm in itself and in relation to Methodism, see Umphrey Lee, *The Historical Backgrounds of Early Methodist Enthusiasm* and Sister M. Kevin Whelan, S.S.J., *Enthusiasm in English Poetry of the Eighteenth Century*. Sister Whelan's bibliography lists other primary and secondary sources.

⁶⁷ For flings at Methodism by Henry Carey and Alexander Pope, see I, 386 and 496.

⁶⁸ Anstey quotes a sentimental funeral hymn in the German Pietist style, which, he says, "the learned Moravian has pirated from . . . Count Zinzendorf's Book of Hymns."

And I think it is certain no harm can befall her,
 For Roger is constantly saying his pray'rs,
 Or singing some spiritual hymn on the stairs ⁶⁶

This Tartuffian rascal achieves his aim, for in Letter XIV "Miss Prudence B[lun]d[e]r[hea]d informs Lady Betty that she has been elected to Methodism by a Vision "

For I dream'd an apparition
 Came, like Roger, from above,
 Saying, by divine commission,
 I must fill you full of love

A footnote directs the reader to Bishop Lavington's *Enthusiasm of Papists and Methodists Compared* for "many instances (particularly of young people) who have been elected in the manner above " In lines which sound unusually serious for Anstey, Prudence's brother describes the outcome

O how shall we know the right way to pursue!—
 Do the ills of mankind from religion accrue!—
 Religion, design'd to relieve all our care,
 Has brought my poor sister to grief and despair
 Now she talks of damnation, and screws up her face,
 Then prates about Roger, and spiritual grace
 Her senses, alas! seem at once gone astray—
 No pen can describe it, no letter convey ⁷⁰

Horace Walpole, it will be remembered, contemptuously credits Whitefield with being sincerely insane ⁷¹ Anything like a complete collection of such brief mocking allusions would fill a volume Robert Lloyd, in *A Tale*, glances leeringly at the Methodist love feasts Hall-Stevenson maligns the greatest of charity preachers when he speaks of

Whitefield, emptying the pockets
 Of whores, and bawds, and gaping throngs,
 Turning his eyes out of their sockets,
 Singing and selling David's songs ⁷²

More seriously, Kenrick attacks from the political angle

See still th' enthusiastic band
 Cant, whine, and madden o'er the land,
 By scripture-craz'd fanatics led,
 Whitefield or Westley, at their head,

Ah! think how fatal, soon or late,
 Such crazy members to the state

⁶⁶ Letter II

⁷⁰ Letter XV

⁷¹ See p 17

⁷² Ode to Zachary

How dang'rous to the public weal
 Blind ignorance and foolish zeal
 Reflect in what a dreadful hour
 Nonsense usurped the hand of power,
 When puritans the land o'er-run,
 And sacrilege was pious fun
 While wretches for their country's good,
 Dipt their vile hands in royal blood!⁷³

Kenrick is not the sort of person who is horrified by sacrilege, but he hates the Methodists. Any stick will serve to beat a dog with. Churchill of course finds in Methodism a perfect illustration of his thesis that all zeal is hypocrisy. We have already seen that he regards Whitefield as a self-seeking humbug.⁷⁴ In *Gotham* he pays his compliments to the missionary work in Georgia

Happy, thrice happy, now the savage race,
 Since Europe took their gold, and gave them grace!
 Pastors she sends to help them in their need,
 Some who can't write, and others who can't read,
 And on sure grounds the Gospel pile to rear,
 Sends missionary felons every year

The stodgy Christians of Chapter III seldom practise forms which provide opportunity for direct attack upon the saints, but their opinion of the Revival may safely be inferred from their implicit and often explicit horror of enthusiasm. When Walter Harte writes of

Fanatic Withers! fam'd for rhymes and sighs,
 And Jacob Behmen! most obscurely wise,

we know what he thinks of Methodism, and the same inference may be drawn from Mary Leapor's praise of the *Essay on Man* as a rebuke to "stern Enthusiasts."⁷⁵ Samuel Bowden, a less solemn foe of fanaticism, produces "A Ballad" entitled *The Mechanic Inspir'd Or, The Methodist's Welcome to Frome*. These falsely named zealots, he insists, "observe no method at all."

Much terror they preach, with boldness asserted,
 And some are, for fear of the devil, converted,
 But with all their wild rant, they can teach us no more,
 Than the practical duties we all knew before

Then begone, ye false prophets, go whine out damnation,
 Experience, impulse, and regeneration,

⁷³ *On the Investigation of Truth*

⁷⁴ See p. 38

⁷⁵ See p. 53

We want no such tutors, our duty to shew,
If we copy in practise—but half what we know

In vain bigots prate, and zealots declaim,
While Heaven-born Virtue shines always the same,
Let them damn,—and debate,—and divide while they will,
True Religion resides in the honest man still

The conviction that religion is merely a matter of discharging "the practical duties" was a major factor in the opposition to Methodism. The anonymous author of *The Pluralist* must be almost unique in blaming the Establishment itself for Methodist excesses.⁷⁶

As has already been suggested, the sentimentalists were often opposed to enthusiasm. Edward Young, who was one of Wesley's favorite poets and who was termed "enthusiastic" by Kenrick,⁷⁷ presented to his church at Welwyn a bell inscribed with the words, "Prosperity to the Established Church and no Encouragement to Enthusiasm."⁷⁸ The indubitably sentimental William Mason strongly disliked enthusiasm and seconded Warburton's assault on Wesley.⁷⁹ John Langhorne, another bard of "simple" nature, benevolism, and sensibility, wrote *Letters on Religious Retirement, Melancholy, and Enthusiasm* (1762) to dissuade a woman whom he calls Cleora from becoming a religious recluse. He warns his correspondent against "the power of imagination in religious matters." In some instances it has even driven its victims to madness—"instances, Cleora, within my own knowledge—believe me, it is dangerous to indulge it. Whenever we give up Reason to the Chimæras of Imagination, let us pretend to what impulses we please, we are no better than Enthusiasts." Penitence, desirable in the profligate, is unnecessary for so virtuous a person as Cleora. Surely she cannot suppose that God wishes her to torment herself. "The voice of Religion is the voice of Joy. How different, my friend, is this rational and cheerful spirit from the gloomy superstition and enthusiasm of our modern Saints!" Asceticism is contrary to the will of Him who wishes us to "enjoy the good things of this world with temperance and decency. The end of Providence is to make you happy, and it is your duty to co-operate with the Divine will, by taking every means that may contribute to that end." In short, Cleora cannot hope to please God by making herself uncomfortable.

Other examples of the sentimentalist's opposition to Methodism will be

⁷⁶ See p. 74.

⁷⁷ See p. 43.

⁷⁸ W. Thomas, *Le Poète Edward Young*, p. 179n.

⁷⁹ J. W. Draper, *William Mason*, pp. 131 and 277.

glanced at later in sketches of individual poets The remainder of this chapter will deal with some of the longer and more formal anti-Methodist satires

The Progress of Methodism in Bristol (1743)⁸⁰ chiefly attempts to show that the collection of funds for building chapels and for the support of the Georgia mission is a "job" to fleece the gullible But the anonymous author includes other points in his crudely hudibrastic verses Gleeefully he exposes the doctrinal disputes between Wesley and Whitefield He accuses Wesley of violating the Seventy-second Canon, which forbids any minister to "attempt to cast out any Devil or Devils without the license of the Bishop of the Diocese" The sexual depravity of the saints is dwelt upon with feebly obscene malice At the chapels built by Wesley at Bristol and Kingswood,

Alike in both, for soft *Amuses*,
Are proper Rooms for *private Uses*

The footnote adds "Furnished with Beds, etc" Other Methodist practises arouse his suspicions

A Watch-Night they're enjoin'd to keep,
Who, while they watch, refrain from Sleep,
And then both Male and Female too,
They *join together*—What to do?

An Appendix, longer than the poem itself, prints documents concerning Wesley's relations with Mrs Williamson in Georgia, his refusal to admit her to the Sacrament, and so on

More competently written but no less vicious and extravagant is *The Methodist* (1766) It is the work of Evan Lloyd, who received more general consideration in Chapter III The basic device is that of Abel Evans's *The Apparition*⁸¹ Satan comes to earth in search of a reliable tool and selects, not Tindal this time, but Whitefield The cross-eyed sorcerer

knows his Master's Realm so well,
His Sermons are a Map of Hell,
An Olio made of Conflagration,
Of Gulphs of Brimstone, and Damnation

⁸⁰ *The Progress of Methodism in Bristol Or, The Methodist Unmask'd Wherein the Doctrines, Discipline, Policy, Divisions and Successes of that Novel Sect are fully detected, and properly display'd, in Hudibrastic Verse By an Impartial Hand To which is added, by Way of Appendix, the Paper-Controversy between Mr Robert Williams, supported by Thomas Christie, Esq, Recorder of Savannah, and the Rev Mr Wesley, supported only, by his own Integrity and Assurance Together with authentick Extracts taken from a late Narrative of the State of Georgia, relating to the conduct of that Reverend Gentleman during his Abode in that Colony, etc*

⁸¹ See I, 55-56

In order to show virgins the shortest way to the skies, "He lays them down upon their back " Other agents of Satan are Wesley, Martin Madan, and William Romaine Romaine's specialty is Antinomianism he

pulls you by Gravity up-Hill,
And for whate'er you do amiss,
Rewards you with celestial Bliss,
By your bad Deeds your Faith you shew,
'Tis but believe, and up you go

The Prince of Darkness also has a female servitor

H[untingdon], cloy'd with carnal Bliss,
Longing to taste how *Spirits* kiss,
Bids Chapels for her Saints arise,
Which are but Bagnios in Disguise,
Where she may suck her T——'s Breath,⁸⁸
Expiring in seraphic Death

It is good to know that Lloyd was imprisoned for libel as a result of this performance

Who was the anonymous writer who spewed forth a series of long anti-Methodist satires entitled *Perfection*, *The Temple of Imposture*, *The Love-Feast*, *The Saints*, *Sketches for Tabernacle-Frames*, and *Fanatical Conversion*?⁸⁹ The doctoral candidate who answers this question will either enlarge the bibliography of some well-known writer of the period or will discover a hitherto unrecognized satirist of about the same order of merit as Paul Whitehead The *bel inconnu* is extremely pro-American and anti-ministerial, and his hatred of Methodism is related to a more general feeling that all ardently supernaturalistic religion is an imposture. These are the only clues, and they prove nothing

The Temple of Imposture bears the motto, "The baseless Fabric of a *Vision* —Shakespeare " In the temple which the sleeping poet beholds in his vision are the tomb of Mahomet and a statue of that knavish "enthusiast," Loyola Joan of Arc, on the other hand, is commemorated as an example of "honest Fraud " Other statues represent Mary Tofts the rabbit-woman, the Cock-

⁸⁸ What name is here concealed? Toplady seems the likeliest guess, despite the injury to the metre

⁸⁹ All were printed by J Bew of 28 Paternoster Row That they are the work of a single author may be gathered from the title pages or publisher's advertisements *Perfection*, which I have not seen, was advertised in 1778 as "lately published " *Fanatical Conversion* appeared in 1779, all the others in 1778

Lane Ghost, "Fanatic Naylor, with his Crown of Thorns," and "Elizabeth Barstow, the Holy Maid of Kent, spirited up by the Popish Party to prevent the Reformation, by pretending to the Gift of Prophecy"

Her Jesuitic Confessor stands by,
And prompts her, *for the Love of God*,—to lye

The vision includes an allegorical pageant in which quacks, false prophets, and crafty priests of all sects and ages bow down in worship of Furina, Goddess of Imposture

Her Breast sustain'd (well purchas'd with the Loss
Of human Blood) a Fragment of the Cross,
Which Fancy realiz'd, but Craft had made,
Fictitious Bauble of some mad Crusade!

Not all the worshippers of Furina are papists, however, for that hypocritical tyrant John Calvin is among them

Doctrines, not Scripture, claim'd his first Respect,
With him Faith mask'd Morality's Defect

Our satirist wishes us to feel the essential unity of all religious fanaticism

Here fire-ey'd Zeal in search of Converts stood,
Waving her Scourge still wet with Martyr's Blood
Her Brain with legendary Fables swims,
Her Tongue for ever chaunting frantic Hymns,
Such as thro' Caves, and Mosques, and Fields have rung,
From Druid-Ages down to Wesley's sung

Thus there is nothing new about Methodism Mahomet, the archimposter, addresses Furina

In servile Imitation of my Plan,
Priests now in Tabernacles fish for Man
There, to thy Honour, Goddess, thou canst see
M[ada]n, R[oma]ne, and W[esle]y, mimic *me*

Appropriately, then, the purpose of *Fanatical Conversion* "is to account for Fanatical Conversion among Methodists in a *natural* way The Author, with all the impious Assurance of an *Infidel*, presumes to treat it here as the audacious Offspring of infamous Imposture" Passages from Wesley's journals are sneered at nastily

The title of *The Love-Feast* is self-explanatory The following picture of

the Methodist congregation is in the good old Puritan-baiting tradition of Butler, Tom Brown, and Ned Ward

O for a Hogarth's Humour, to describe
The grotesque Faces of the sniv'ling Tribe!
Such Features as no Pencil ever caught,
Past the *Capriccio* of a Dutchman's thought,
Mouths open, Whites of Eyes, erected Ears,
Caricatures created by Teniers
Ev'n whilst they kneel their vicious Passions glow,
Clear Proofs that such Religion is but Show

The chapel is full of whores in search of business One worshipper is described

Ev'n whilst the Chalice to his Lips is put,
One Eye thanks Heav'n, and t'other marks a Slut

A Methodist pickpocket is glad to believe that "Nature with Man Man on a Level puts," and the footnote, which might have been written in the seventeenth century, reminds us that "These Saints are great Levellers" The author asserts that he has witnessed with his own eyes the orgies which take place when the candles are extinguished at midnight At the conclusion of the poem Reynard (Wesley), Romano (Romaine), and SIMONIO⁸⁴ are called before Venus to receive thanks for their efficient services to her

Sketches for Tabernacle-Frames directly attacks Wesley, again as Reynard

Fools feed on Sounds, while John enjoys the Sense
Of Thanks return'd in tributary *Pence*

A natural Dissenter, he remained within the Church of England only because he discovered that "Orthodoxy was the Way to thrive" His political pamphlets, plagiarized from Dr Johnson's *Taxation No Tyranny*,

prove that *perfect Piety* will stoop
To be Corruption's lowest, meanest Dupe
To steal from Liberty her Charter'd-Roll,
And sell its Conscience, Country, and its Soul

Wesley has even less savory peculiarities

As an adopting Father, too, he's known,
Of some Productions John don't chuse to own

⁸⁴ Unidentified Charles Simeon was only 20 in 1779 Despite the absurdity of the charge, the likeliest candidate is Simon Fletcher

He has turned over to the general use of the saints one Priscilla, "an old cast-off Strumpet" of his

Morality she deems a filthy Rag
Hung out by bare Professors as a Flag,
Faith, Faith alone, 's the Christian Church's Banner,
And under that fight all the Saints that man her

In a final flourish the satirist declares that if there *were* such a villain as Reynard,

Not all the Piles he raises to the Lord
Shou'd tempt my Hand to blot this true Record,

What tho' he crawl'd, an abject, passive Thing,
To lick the royal Slaver of a K[ing]!
That Slaver wou'd not heal the Wounds I give,
In hourly Dread the Hypocrite shou'd live

To his own Lips I'd hold his Chalice up,
And force him to exhaust his poison'd Cup
To see his Fall a Nation wrong'd shou'd smile,
And by my Hand be freed from Priestly Guile,
His odious Name shou'd stink beyond the Grave,
And Truth proclaim him a recorded Knave

The Saints repeats the same charges against Wesley, but it includes a more general treatment of Methodist enthusiasm

Lest decent Forms to Bigotry shou'd lead,
Their unexampled Faith admits no Creed
From us *Professors* they with Scorn dissent,
Yet with no Tenets their vague Sect cement
Fix'd Principles wou'd Zeal's bright Flame restrain,
And cool too fast the Fever of their Brain,
From Reason free, they give their Fancies wing,
Groan, weep, rave, rant, confess, exhort, and sing

The lay preachers are vulgar, ignorant, and conceited

Brimful of Righteousness, unaw'd by Sense,
By Inspiration urg'd and Impudence,
The Bricklay'r's-Labourer, with horny Fists,
On Faith in Preference to Works insists

The unfair and malevolent productions of this unknown writer are good satires in the sense that they are well adapted to their purpose. But they are

crude and clumsy compared to the ironic thrusts of the Reverend Nathaniel Lancaster (1701-1775)⁸⁶ in *Methodism Triumphant, Or, The Decisive Battle Between the Old Serpent and the Modern Saint*, (1767) *The Dictionary of National Biography*, completely missing the point, dismisses it as "a long rhapsodical poem" The author of the article might at least have glanced at the invocation

O thou celestial Source of Ecstasies,
Of Visions, Raptures, and converting Dreams—
Awful Ebriety of New-Birth Grace!
Thee, Mania, I invoke my pen to guide,
To fire my soul, and urge my bold career
Come then, and with thee bring thy glad ally
Phantasia—bring her visionary Train

Lancaster's parody of Methodist thought is sometimes so realistic that his satirical intention is almost obscured One needs to have all the poet's distaste for enthusiasm to detect the sneer in his account of conditions before the rise of Wesley

Long had Religion worn a languid form,
Nor with the ancient lustre shone her light
Proud Reason triumph'd—Prudence was admir'd,
And Human Learning rais'd her Pagan head
True Zeal, beneath the frigorific shade
Of cautious Moderation, shiv'ring lay—
Sober was Sanctity—Devotion calm

Wesley thus describes his own very different temper

True Gospel-Preachers this firm Conduct hold—
Scorning the Use of frigorific Rules,
The Aid of Reason, and of Human Sense,
On that Celestial Spirit they rely,
Who over Faith and Grace restor'd presides

Avaunt then, Reason! A Logician here
The Face of Vanity and Folly wears
'Tis Heat—'tis Fire, Imagination strong—
'Tis Light—New Light, and flaming Energy,
Which catch the Soul, and hurry it to Life
Come in a troop, ye ardent Passions, all!

⁸⁶ He owed his introduction into polite society to the patronage of the Earl of Cholmondeley He was chaplain to the Prince of Wales, obtained a D D, and married a rich widow He was a witty talker, but was so extravagant in financial matters that he was forced to sponge on his acquaintances too persistently for the good of his reputation

In a sermon he exhorts his hearers

Does the Flame kindle?—Fan the kindling Flame—
Strive—struggle—labour—put forth all your might—
Push, eager, forward—force victorious way—
And sigh, and pant—and shriek—and tear your breasts—
For thus Regeneration is obtained

Like many other satirists of Methodism, Lancaster associates this anti-intellectualism with an unwholesome sexuality Wesley points proudly at his disciples

In what mysterious amity they live,
Imparadis'd in one another's Arms
And mixing bliss with bliss, and flames with flames,
Rise with united ardour unto Christ

The "Modern Saint" rejoices in this confusion of carnal and spiritual love

Dost thou not see we're Darlings of the Skies—
How fond we lean, and roll ourselves on Christ?
Kisses, Caresses, and endearing Smiles,
Confirm the Passion —Whilst we thus imbibe
The sweet Effusions of a Breath Divine,
Pant our warm Hearts with holy Ravishment,
Whirlwinds of Piety, and Storms of Zeal

Part V of the poem becomes more definitely mock-heroic than the preceding sections Wesley challenges Satan to single combat The latter is both puzzled and indignant, for he insists that Wesley owes him much

That Flow of Words, which is thy daily boast,
Was my free Gift and all those floods of Grace,
Not from the Skies, but from the Stygian Gulph,
Were pour'd into thy breast I bade them take
Delusive Forms of Gospel-Piety
Thy Dreams, thy Visions, thy Fanatic Zeal,
Boasted Perfection, Sanctimonious Pride,
And thy fond Thirst for Glory, from me rose
As ev'ry Form of Priestcraft is my own

In the ensuing fight Satan at first conquers his presumptuous vassal, but Wesley is revived by the Countess of Huntingdon and brains Satan with his massive journals Then he cuts off the fiend's tail and hangs it on his chapel as a token of victory

Lancaster is not without deftness and humor He has a shrewder under-

standing of his enemy than most of these satirists, and despite his extravagance he may perhaps be credited with a sincere desire to defend "moderation" and "reason" against a dangerously loose emotionalism. Such merit as his work possesses, however, does not mitigate the distress which the latter part of this chapter must have given every decent-minded reader. It may fairly be argued that certain aspects of Methodism were open to adverse criticism and even to satire. But it is sad to see this great religious movement greeted with so loud a chorus of uncomprehending mockery, personal spite, evil-minded cynicism, and hellish malevolence—all with hardly a trace of real concern for the well-being of Christianity. These foes of the saints have convinced us that Wesley was sorely needed.

Chapter VI

FOUR CHRISTIAN POETS

AS AN INTRODUCTION TO A SERIES OF CHAPTERS WHICH WILL ILLUSTRATE CLIMACTICALLY the influence of the cult of sentiment, we shall examine four especially interesting writers who are unmistakably Christians. The long career of Edward Young unites this volume with its predecessor. John Byrom, defender of enthusiasm, represents the type of religious thought which the eighteenth century called "mystical." From the shaken mind of Christopher Smart, a mystic of a different sort, comes the most exalted and passionate religious lyric of the period. In William Cowper, the Evangelical Movement finds a voice. At their best Young, Smart, and Cowper are religious poets of real merit, and Byrom, though seldom more than a versifier of ideas, teems with points of historical significance.

The name of Edward Young (1683-1765) has appeared more than once in these pages. In advance of any discussion of this writer, it was safe to assume that at least his chief poem and his critical *Conjectures* were familiar to the reader. Even now that the time for considering him has arrived, a good deal may be taken for granted. His biography has been written by Walter Thomas¹ and rewritten by H. C. Shelley.² His position in the Romantic Movement has been set forth by Harry Hayden Clark.³ The same scholar has treated the melancholy of Edward Young⁴—a subject which also receives attention in the more general studies of melancholy and graveyardism by J. W. Draper, A. L. Reed, Eleanor Sickels, and Paul Van Tieghem. An article by Isabel S. Bliss accurately places *Night Thoughts* in relation to the theology of the period.⁵ Students of the eighteenth century

¹ *Le Poète Edward Young: étude sur sa vie et ses œuvres*

² *The Life and Letters of Edward Young*

³ "The Romanticism of Edward Young," *Transactions of the Wisconsin Academy*, XXIV, 1-45

⁴ "A Study of Melancholy in Edward Young," *Modern Language Notes*, XXXIX, 129-36 and 193-202

⁵ "Young's *Night Thoughts* in Relation to Contemporary Christian Apologetics," *PMLA*, XLIX, 37-70

will therefore be prepared to grant that Young, the preromantic Puritan, strongly supports the thesis of the present study

Just what sort of religious teaching Young derived from his clerical father is uncertain. The Reverend Edward Young, senior, was an able man much esteemed as a preacher, but his theological convictions were those of the Vicar of Bray. He was a Tory in Restoration times, a stout Whig under William and Mary, a "trimming" Whig under Queen Anne. Perhaps his most important bequest to his son was the patronage of the Wharton family.

M. Thomas attempts to find the roots of the poet's preromanticism not in parental influences but in the atmosphere of Winchester School, which he describes as a place of melancholy, monastic traditions, Gothic architecture, and blank verse.⁶ The hypothesis seems forced. It is more probable that Young was by nature an emotional Christian who found in the reform movement of the Queen Anne period a congenial outlet for his temperament.⁷ But on another side of his perplexing character Young was a witty man of the world. At Oxford his behavior exhibited a queer mixture of "worldliness and otherworldliness."⁸ Thomas cannot authenticate the anecdote that Tindal respected Young's ability as a defender of Christian revelation, but he rightly observes that it tells us something about his reputation in the university.⁹ The pious apologist, however, did not spurn the favors of the dissolute Philip Wharton. He was to become an admirer of Richardson without ever quite losing his affection for Voltaire.

Although Young was a Whig, he engaged in a little politic straddling during the Tory years from 1710 to 1714. His first published poem, *An Epistle to Lord Lansdowne* (1713), congratulates the Tory peer on his elevation to the ministry and hails the Peace of Utrecht with un-Whiggish enthusiasm. But even in this politically motivated poem a note of piety is struck. Now that the treaty has been signed,

Devotion shall run pure, and disengage
From that strange fate of mixing peace with rage
On Heaven without a sin we now may call,
And guiltless to our Maker prostrate fall,
Be Christians while we pray, nor in one breath
Ask mercy for ourselves, for others death

The politics of the *Epistle* won him the friendship of such Tory wits as Swift, but even in this period the religious temper displayed in the lines just

⁶ *Le Poète Edward Young*, pp. 11-22.

⁷ See "Reform, moral and religious," in the Index of Topics of Vol. I.

⁸ I allude, of course, to the title of George Eliot's famous essay on Young.

⁹ *Le Poète Edward Young*, p. 55.

quoted drew him more strongly toward the soberer Whig reformers Addison, as readers of the *Conjectures on Original Composition* know, became for him the great example of a Christian genius. The fact provides a useful clue. No one would assert that Young was an admirable man. He was conceited, he was something of a poseur, he was too much inclined to pity himself, he was a whining, toadying place-hunter. But he was no mere hypocrite. He saw in Addison a perfect equilibrium of elements which he desired to reconcile in himself: reason and feeling, wit and piety, aristocratic urbanity and bourgeois earnestness. Young failed to achieve this balance because his character, which was weaker than Addison's, could not harmonize his emotions, which were stronger than Addison's. Running through Young's life we can see the crack caused by imperfect juxtaposition of the two sides of the Addisonian compromise.

In *The Last Day* (1714), however, he reminds us less of Addison than of the more rigorously puritanical champions of moral and religious reform—Blackmore, Watts, Dennis, Mrs. Rowe, John Hughes.³⁰ Its dedicatory praise of Queen Anne, pious descendent of the Royal Martyr, need not prevent us from regarding the poem as a sincere attempt to scare a licentious age into religion through a portrayal of the "Four Last Things." Though the joys of heaven are set forth with that beaming exuberance which will always mingle with Young's melancholy, much heavier emphasis is laid upon the pains of hell, where sinners shall be

Curs'd with returns of vigour, still the same
Powerful to bear, and satisfy the flame
Still to be caught, and still to be pursued!
To perish still, and still to be renew'd!

The foretokening of Keats's *Grecian Urn* is curious.

The poem is conventional in content, but rather unusual for the period in its apparently sincere devotional fervor, in its attempt not merely to discuss but to imagine the Day of Judgment, and above all in its subjective quality. The theme is treated as a vision which Young himself beholds. This device is too often lost in moralizing argument, but it saves the poem from being merely rhetorical. In Book III, when the poet assumes the character of a condemned sinner and indulges in a long, hysterical tragedy speech, he

³⁰ But the close relation between such writers and the less urgently pious reformism of Addison and Steele is shown by the essay on sacred poetry in the *Guardian* for May 9, 1713. It quotes and commends Young's poem, which is still in manuscript. Thomas assumes that the essay is Steele's. Shelley suspects that Young himself may be the author.

is doubtless making a self-consciously literary exploitation of his religion. This fact, however, by no means indicates that his religion is spurious.

The Last Day was well received and went through a second edition within a year of its appearance. Students too readily forget that there was a large public for poems of this type. In 1719 Young enhanced his reputation among "serious" readers by publishing *A Paraphrase on Part of the Book of Job*.¹¹ The nobly simple original is inflated and decorated in a way which would then have been less distressing than it is now. The poem, indeed, is a respectable performance in a familiar convention. In 1700 Blackmore had paraphrased the entire Book of Job, with a preface asserting the relation between divine poetry and original genius. "'Tis to be wish'd," he wrote, "that some good Genius, qualified for such an Undertaking, would break the Ice, assert the Liberty of Poetry, and set up for an Original in Writing in a way accommodated to the Religion, Manners, and other Circumstances we are now under. In this Book of Job, they will find a Poem that is indeed an Original, and not beholding to the Greek and Latin Springs."¹² The future author of the *Conjectures on Original Composition* has inherited these ideas from his fellow-reformer, though he has not yet fully developed them. In footnotes to his paraphrase he says that "The Almighty's speech is by much the finest part of the noblest and most ancient poem in the world" and that "The Book of Job is well known to be dramatic, and, like the tragedies of old Greece, is fiction built on truth."

But 1719, the year in which this paraphrase was published, was also the year in which *Busiris* was produced. Young was turning to drama in a different spirit from that which actuated the author of *Job*. The years 1719-1726, when he thought of himself as a dramatist and professional man of letters, constitute the most mundane phase of his career. "Nothing was more improbable at this time," says H. C. Shelley, "than that he should become a minister of religion. His chief companions were the 'Wits' of the coffee-houses, the managers and players of Drury Lane, and ambitious politicians such as Wharton and Bubb Dodington and Lord Stanhope."¹³ But it would be a mistake to suppose that Young entirely forsook his earlier piety. Walter Thomas attributes to him certain anonymous essays which, beginning in 1724, appeared in Aaron Hill's *Plain Dealer*. They contain ideas and moods

¹¹ It covers Job's complaint to God and God's reply. Thomas, *Le Poète Edward Young*, p. 47, ascribes to Young an essay in the *Guardian* for June 6, 1713, comparing the classical poets and the author of *Job* as regards the description of the war horse. Preference is given to the latter.

¹² See *Religious Trends in English Poetry*, I, 192-93.

¹³ *Life and Letters*, p. 62.

looking backward to *The Last Day* and forward to *Night Thoughts*¹⁴ Such ideas and moods, however, were not peculiar to Young his friend Aaron Hill, for example, shared them to a considerable extent¹⁵ Safer evidence of the continuity of Young's spiritual life is provided by *Love of Fame, the Universal Passion* (1725-1726)

The "Seven Characteristical Satires"¹⁶ which compose this work are, to be sure, barbed with the bright, sneering wit which one associates with the unreligious and unromantic side of the eighteenth century But the author of *The Last Day* has not vanished he has simply adopted a different evangelistic technique, choosing now to address the age in its own language He is one of a very few satirists who are genuinely moved by what is usually no more than a traditional pretense—a desire to improve people by saying unpleasant things about them He is quite sincere when he declares in his preface "Ethics, Heathen and Christian, and the Scriptures themselves, are, in a great measure, a satire on the weakness and iniquity of men " Even the wittiest passages are solemn in their purpose

Amasia hates a prude, and scorns restraint,
Whate'er she *is*, she'll not *appear* a saint
Her soul superior flies formality,
So gay her air, her conduct is so free,
Some might suspect the nymph not over-good,—
Nor would they be mistaken, if they should

Not infrequently the preaching is wholly direct and earnest

Beware the fever of the *mind'* that thirst
By which the age is eminently curst
To drink of *pleasure*, but inflames desire,
And abstinence alone can quench the fire,
Take *pain* from life, and *terroure* from the tomb,
Give peace *in hand*, and promise bliss *to come*

It is far from surprising that the author of such lines should have become a clergyman

There were prudential as well as religious reasons for his taking holy orders just as the reign of George I was closing Walpole had granted him a

¹⁴ *Le Poète Edward Young*, p. 83

¹⁵ For Aaron Hill see I, 447-53

¹⁶ So called because his points are conveyed chiefly through character sketches in the manner later perfected by Pope in his *Moral Essays*

pension of 200 pounds, but that was insufficient. His writings had not been very profitable, and the patronage system was rapidly decaying. Under the new monarch, a literary clergyman whose Whiggery had been unblemished since 1714 might hope for good preferment. He was given a royal chaplaincy, but his increasingly close association, through Dodington, with the Prince of Wales's party proved a bar to his advancement in the Church. He was lucky to get the living of Welwyn in 1730, and the failure of his subsequent attempts to rise above the level of a country parson was quite to be expected. But in many ways Young's new profession was thoroughly congenial. Though he was never a very devoted parish priest, he was esteemed as a preacher and as a man who united the elegance of a person of quality, the sensibility of a poet, and the goodness of a Christian.

Since in his first speech from the throne George II had emphasized the importance of the merchant marine, Young pounced upon the lofty theme in an ode entitled *Ocean*, which was followed two years later by a similar effusion, *Imperium Pelagi, or The Merchant*. These poems, whose absurd bardic afflatus suggests the influence of Aaron Hill, are noteworthy for their Whiggish elevation of commerce to religious heights.

Commerce brings riches, riches crown
Fair virtue with the first renown
A large *revenue*, and a large *expense*,
When hearts for others welfare glow,
And spend as free as gods bestow,
Gives the full bloom to mortal excellence

Wealth, in the virtuous and the *wise*,
'Tis vice and folly to despise
Let those in praise of poverty refine,
Whose heads or hearts pervert its use,
The *narrow-soul'd*, or the *profuse*,
The *truly-great* find *morals* in the mine

Happy the man! who, large of heart,
Has learnt the rare, illustrious *art*
Of being rich

Observe the attempt to reconcile the competitive spirit of trade with the cult of universal benevolence—a belated answer to Mandeville's paradox of "Private vices, public benefits." Young adds that merchants provide those

blessings for which priests merely pray and finally associates commerce with the fabric of the Newtonian universe

Kings, merchants, are in league and love,
Earth's odours pay soft *airs* above,
That o'er the teeming earth prolific range,
Planets are merchants, take, return,
Lustre and heat, by *traffic* burn,
The whole creation is one vast exchange¹⁷

This exuberant faith in material progress is inconsistent with the melancholy of *Night Thoughts*, but not with a neglected aspect of that poem which will be examined later

In large measure, of course, these odes are a politic concession to the spirit of the age. The more sombre and unworldly strain in Young's character appears simultaneously in his prose treatise, *A True Estimate of Human Life* (1728).¹⁸ He presents a rather detailed analysis of the passions in order to show that they all contribute to our misery. Since there can be no happiness on this earth, reason demands that we fix our thoughts on the things which are heavenly. The mood is that of *The Last Day*, the psychological approach that of *Love of Fame*. This attempt to make men desire immortality by convincing them of the unhappiness of mortal life shows that *Night Thoughts* was the natural outcome of Young's prior development.

But of course there are special reasons for the special qualities of this poem. By 1742, when *The Complaint, or Night Thoughts* began to appear, sensibility was becoming a badge of moral and aesthetic distinction, and the love of pensive retirement was a sure sign of sensibility. Young was well qualified to combine the heavily pietistic melancholy of the puritan funeral elegies with the superficially "contemplative" melancholy of the *Il Penseroso* tradition. In doing so he satisfied his heart's desire—to be simultaneously an evangelist and a literary genius.

But during the twelve years at Welwyn, sorrow and solitude and contemplativeness had become for him much more than literary fashions. His worldly ambitions had been frustrated. The loss of his stepdaughter, of his son-in-law, and of his own wife had given personal import to his nocturnal musings on "life, death, and immortality." Young exaggerates and dramatizes his woes, he disposes himself in affecting attitudes, he savors his own

¹⁷ *Imperium Pelagi*

¹⁸ An expansion of a sermon delivered at St. George's, Hanover Square, soon after the death of George I.

tears Yet the glycerine of those tears is mingled with human brine Not unlike Tennyson in *In Memoriam*, he wishes to show the world that personal sorrow, as well as the general misery of human life, can be put to religious uses

For such an attempt the times were ripe Although the main trend of eighteenth-century thought continued to move away from Christianity, a countertendency was at work in Methodism and Evangelicalism Even men who shunned this movement as dangerously enthusiastic were often willing to admit, if only on grounds of ethical expediency, that a revival of Christianity was desirable The precepts of Seneca and Cicero, the deistic religion of nature, had proved impotent to check the spread of moral decay The only remedy, some thought, was to bring back the supernatural

Religion! the sole voucher man is man,
Supporter sole of man above himself,

Religion! Providence! an after-state!
Here is firm footing, *here* is solid rock!
This can support us, all is sea besides!¹⁹

Even the optimistic, universal-benevolence deism of Pope was not enough

O had he press'd his theme, pursued the track,
Which opens out of darkness into day!
O had he, mounted on his wing of fire,
Soar'd where I sink, and sung *immortal* man!²⁰

There was work to be done by a veteran who had preserved, throughout the age of Walpole, much of the spirit of the Queen Anne reform movement If through the years his Puritanism had grown a little blurred and histrionic, it would be all the more effective for that

I shall return to the religion of *Night Thoughts* after completing this brief sketch of Young's career Here it is enough to say that the poem is fundamentally an essay in apologetics which possesses a closer unity than has generally been recognized *Nights* V-IX are of course more directly argumentative and less autobiographical and subjectively emotional than *Nights* I-IV, but a strongly personal element pervades the whole Conversely, there is plenty of outright didacticism in *Nights* I-IV, and Young's evangelistic aim is almost immediately clear The deaths of Philander, Narcissa, and Lucia are closely related to the message of the poem, they bring into focus the woes of earthly life and the consequent need of im-

¹⁹ *Night IV*

²⁰ *Night I*

universal fame True poesy, like true religion, abhors idolatry real, though unexampled excellence is its only aim, nor looks it for any inspiration less than divine" Young is no innovator in criticism He merely develops the puritan view of religious, original, divinely-inspired, enthusiastic poetry which had been carried from the seventeenth century into the eighteenth by Dennis, Watts, and Blackmore²⁸

This vigorous essay was the work of a man of seventy-nine, but even as late as 1762 he was able to produce a lengthy though rather feebly garrulous poem *Resignation* was written at the request of Mrs Elizabeth Montagu for Admiral Boscawen's widow, who had found in *Night Thoughts* her only source of consolation The Advertisement provides a clear summary "God Almighty's infinite power, and marvellous goodness to man, is dwelt on, as the most just and cogent reason for our cheerful and absolute resignation to his will, nor are any of those topics declined, which have a just tendency to promote that supreme virtue such as the vanity of this life, the value of the next, the approach of death, etc" The "etc" could be filled in by any reader of *Night Thoughts* except for the address to Voltaire which concludes Part II Admiringly, pleadingly, warningly, he lectures his old acquaintance as one dying man to another

Voltaire! long life's the greatest curse
That mortals can receive,
When they imagine the chief end
Of living is to live,

Hear you that sound? Alarming sound!
Prepare to meet your fate!
One, who writes FINIS to your works,
Is knocking at the gate

But even yet there may be time for the Frenchman to use his wit as the Englishman has used his—for the preservation of religion and virtue in an unbelieving, vicious age

O! how disorder'd our machine,
When contradictions mix!
When Nature strikes no less than twelve,
And folly points at six!

To mend the moments of your heart,
How great is my delight

²⁸ Readers who hesitate to accept this statement, which depends on much that has gone before, should see in the Index of Topics of Vol I the entries for "Enthusiasm in poetry," "Genius," "Imagination," "Poetry," and "Sublimity"

Gently to wind your morals up,
And set your hand aright!

That hand, which spread your wisdom wide
To poison distant lands
Repent, recant, the tainted age
Your antidote demands,

To Satan dreadfully resign'd,
Whole herds rush down the steep
Of folly, by lewd wits possess'd,
And perish in the deep

Such, from *The Last Day to Resignation*, is Young's message to mankind That he did not always live up to it is no argument against its genuineness He was a witty, sentimental, posturing, believing Protestant Christian—an odd but perfectly possible combination which must now, primarily as regards *Night Thoughts*, be analyzed a little more closely

According to H H Clark, Young "represents a transition from deism to romantic pantheism"²⁴ The statement is perplexing, since *Night Thoughts* is one long polemic against deism It is true that Young's Christianity is of the kind which eventually sloughs down into pantheism,²⁵ but he is much too old-fashioned to represent an advanced stage in this process "He is deistic," Clark goes on, "in regarding God as the architect of nature" But to be a deist is to *restrict* religion to the natural revelation, and one of Young's chief aims is to transcend this restriction Like almost all Christians of his generation, Young is a strong Newtonian For him "devotion" is the "daughter of astronomy" He bids Lorenzo study "Nature's system of divinity" in "The *mathematic* glories of the skies" Like many of his contemporaries, he also sees in the Newtonian universe a "picture of benevolence"

The planets of each system represent
Kind neighbours, mutual amity prevails,
Sweet interchange of rays, receiv'd, return'd,
Enlightening, and enlighten'd! All, at once
Attracting, and attracted! Patriot-like,
None sins against the welfare of the whole,
But their reciprocal, unselfish aid,
Affords an emblem of millennial love²⁶

²⁴ "A Study of Melancholy in Edward Young," *PMLA*, XXXIX, 196

²⁵ See the concluding chapter of Vol I, especially pp 552-53

²⁶ *Night IX* In the fifth line, observe the official language of the "Patriot" party

This is ground shared in common by deism and the Christianity of the age. Young, however, is quite orthodox in avoiding any confusion between nature and

The nameless *He*, whose nod is *Nature's* birth,
And *Nature's* shield, the shadow of his hand,
Her dissolution, his suspended smile!"²⁷

Since nature is "All change, no death," it supports man's hope of immortal life. But the distinction should be noted

Nature revolves, but man *advances*, both
Eternal, *that* a circle, *this* a line
That gravitates, *this* soars²⁸

Thus although "Nature is *Christian*" to the extent that it "bids dead matter aid us in our creed," the natural revelation in itself can never lift us above nature. For that, belief in supernatural truths is necessary

Faith builds a bridge across the gulf of Death,
To break the shock blind *Nature* cannot shun,
And lands thought smoothly on the further shore.²⁹

The "proof supreme" of immortality, then, is Easter's empty tomb. "He rose! he rose! he burst the bars of death."³⁰

Unlike the typical deist, also, Young insists that religion is more than a matter of virtuous conduct. True virtue depends upon piety

Men of the world this doctrine ill digest
They smile at piety yet boast aloud
Good-will to men, nor know they strive to part
What *Nature* joins, and thus confute themselves.³¹

Night Thoughts ends with an apostrophe to the Trinity in which Young summarizes and asserts belief in all the essential Christian doctrines. We may safely conclude that he was neither a deist nor a pantheist.

This judgment is supported by Miss Isabel Bliss's article on "Young's *Night Thoughts* in Relation to Contemporary Christian Apologetics."³² She observes, however, that "In attempting to defend revealed religion against the deist objections, Young, like other apologists, finds arguments based on reason less applicable than in defending natural religion. He does not indeed resort to argument at all, but merely asserts and re-asserts with feeling

²⁷ *Night IV*
³⁰ *Ibid*

²⁸ *Night VI*
³¹ *Night VIII*

²⁹ *Night IV*
³² *PMLA*, XLIX, 37-70

and emotion that the teachings of revelation are true, that salvation is only through Christ, and by the ardent recital of details of the Crucifixion and Resurrection, of the miracles of the Old Testament, and the account of the Last Day, seeks to win the emotional support of his readers against deism³³ On the whole this statement is accurate, but it ignores the historical significance of Young's belief that he has arguments all the more potent for *not* being "based on reason" in the ordinary sense of the term My point must be approached gradually, for it lies buried deep in Young's thought

Thomas rightly observes Young's love of paradoxes and startling contrasts He is blackly pessimistic and exuberantly optimistic, he preaches the nothingness of man, and elevates him to the stars³⁴

How poor, how rich, how abject, how august,
How complicate, how wonderful, is man!

Helpless immortal! insect *infinite*!
A worm! a god!³⁵

For some inexplicable reason both Young's contemporaries and more recent students have stressed the darker side of the paradox and neglected the brighter side Hence I shall take the former for granted and attempt to do justice to the latter

"They that sow in tears shall reap in joy" Young's nocturnal musings begin in sorrow, but their final outcome is a happiness unknown to the noisy world For him, night is the equivalent of the more fashionable solitary grove—the setting for quiet contemplation

O! lost to virtue, lost to manly thought,
Lost to the noble sallies of the soul!
Who think it solitude, to be alone
Communion sweet! communion large and high!
Our *reason*, *guardian angel*, and our *God*!
Then nearest these, when others most remote³⁶

"Retire, and read thy *Bible*, to be gay,"³⁷ is his advice to Lorenzo

It is of course essential to Young's evangelistic aim that mortal life should be condemned and death praised as the entrance into a happier state

Through chinks, styl'd organs, dim *life* peeps at light,
Death bursts th'envolving cloud, and all is day,
All eye, all ear, the disembody'd power

³³ *Ibid*, p 69

³⁵ *Night I*

³⁴ *Le Poète Edward Young* p 457

³⁶ *Night III*

³⁷ *Night VIII*

Is not the mighty *mind*, that son of Heaven!
 By tyrant *life* dethron'd, imprison'd, pain'd?³⁷
 By *Death* enlarg'd, enobled, deify'd?³⁸
 Death but entombs the body, *life* the soul³⁹

But to think thus of death is to transform one's view of life. Immortality, once believed in, imparts something of its gladness even to the hither side of the grave. The world which Young describes so pessimistically is not the world of the believer. It is the godless world of infidels like Lorenzo, who live with

All feeling of futurity benumbed,
 All god-like passion for eternals quencht,
 All relish of realities expir'd,

Heart-bury'd in the rubbish of the world
 The world, that gulf of souls, immortal souls,
 Souls elevate, angelic, wing'd with fire
 To reach the distant skies, and triumph there⁴⁰

Young reminds Lorenzo that "A God *all* mercy is a God unjust"⁴¹ The sombre threats of *The Last Day* are often repeated in *Night Thoughts*. Nevertheless God wills no evil to man. All the ills of life result from man's misuse of his free will, they are "Begot of *madness* on fair *liberty*"⁴² In the world that God has given us to live in,

None are unhappy, *all* have cause to smile,
 But such as to themselves that cause deny⁴³

Thus Young is not false to his own views when he assures Mrs Boscawen that

Joy is our duty, glory, health,
 The sunshine of the soul,
 Our best encomium on the power
 Who sweetly plans the whole

Joy is our Eden still possess'd
 Be gone, ignoble grief!
 'Tis joy makes gods, and men exalts,
 Their nature, our relief⁴⁴

"'Tis joy makes gods" May one feel here a premonition of Novalis's "Gott will Gotter"? At any rate here is a clue to the paradox of man as

³⁷ *Night III*

⁴¹ *Night IX*

³⁸ *Night II*

⁴² *Ibid*

⁴⁰ *Night IV*

⁴³ *Resignation*

"A worm! a god!" Man attains the godlike state not through rational theology, but through an emotion akin to that of the divine creative benediction. Thus Young tends either to decry reason or to praise it in a sense which makes it almost an equivalent of creative imagination. There is, he answers those cold theologians who "think ardour comes from Hell,"

a grandeur, in the *passions* too,
Which speaks their high descent, and glorious end,
Which speaks them rays of an eternal fire

Even man's wildest passions prove him "born for blessings *infinite*"

Fierce passions, so mis measur'd to *this* scene,
Stretch'd out, like eagle's wings, beyond our nest,
Far, far beyond the worth of all below,
For earth too large, presage a nobler flight,
And evidence our title to the skies ⁴⁴

Carlyle and Browning stand in a direct line of descent from this thought. Despite the miseries of life, this lust for infinitude is proof of the infinite

To *love*, and *know*, in man
Is boundless appetite, and boundless power,
And these demonstrate boundless objects too
Objects, powers, appetites, Heaven suits in all ⁴⁵

Lorenzo must come into his human birthright of joy by wishing largely and masterfully

As man was made for glory, and for bliss,
All littleness is in approach to woe,
Open thy bosom, set thy wishes wide,
And let in manhood, let in happiness,
Admit the boundless theatre of thought
From nothing up to God, which makes a man ⁴⁶

Hence although on occasion Young can argue as doggedly as any of his contemporaries, the more closely he approaches the higher levels of his theme the more he scorns that logical kind of reason in which Miss Bliss finds him deficient. "Born in an age more curious than devout," he has come to see that piety, not science, is the surest path to saving truth ⁴⁷. The path, he tells Mrs. Boscawen in *Resignation*, leads inward

Enter your bosom, there you'll meet
A revelation new,
A revelation personal,
Which none can read but you

⁴⁴ *Night VII*

⁴⁵ *Ibid*

⁴⁶ *Night IX*

⁴⁷ *Ibid*

And Lorenzo, who prates of following nature, is urged to follow his *own* nature—his conscience—which will make him “resemble God”⁴⁸ This scrutiny of conscience is a deeply emotional experience In a way, “Gefühl ist alles,” for

to feel, is to be fir'd,
And to believe, Lorenzo, is to feel⁴⁹

But a little later in the same book Young declares that this believing emotion is the height of reason

Wrong not the Christian, think not reason *yours*
’Tis *reason* our great *Master* holds so dear,
’Tis *reason’s* injur’d rights his wrath resents,

Believe, and show the reason of a man,
Believe, and taste the pleasure of a God

Since the highest reason is a kind of creative feeling—godlike, poetlike—Young has a Carlylean disapproval of the logic chopper, whose learning gives “light, but not heat”⁵⁰ Devotion without passion is worthless

Oh ye cold-hearted, frozen formalists!
On such a theme, ’tis impious to be calm,

Rise odours sweet from incense uninflam’d?
Devotion, when lukewarm, is undevout,
But when it glows, its heat is struck to Heaven⁵¹

And if such views are branded as enthusiastic,

Then all are weak,
But rank enthusiasts To this godlike height
Some souls have soar’d, or martyrs ne’er had bled
And all *may* do, what has by *man* been done
Who, beaten by these sublunary storms,
Boundless, interminable joys can weigh,
Unraptur’d, unexalted, uninflam’d?⁵²

⁴⁸ *Night VIII*

⁴⁹ *Night IV*

⁵⁰ *Night V*

⁵¹ *Night IV*

⁵² *Night VI* We recall Kenrick’s fling at “enthusiastic Young” (See p. 43) Young did not, of course, regard himself as an enthusiast in the more technical theological sense. Although the Wesleys, Hervey, and other figures of the Evangelical Movement admired and used his work, he did not approve of them (Thomas, *Le Poète Edward Young*, p. 179n and pp. 450–51). They represented, in revived form, an earlier phase of Protestantism than his own. Their emphasis on sin and repentance conflicted with his desire to be “godlike.” But it is precisely the strength of this desire which makes Young so clearly the heir of the enthusiastic tradition.

In the last analysis, these raptures are the product of will power "The mother of true wisdom," Lorenzo is assured, "is the will"⁵³ In the poet's own nocturnal meditations,

Silence and darkness
nurse the tender thought
To *reason*, and on reason build *resolve*,
(That column of true majesty in man)⁵⁴

Thanks to the power of the will to believe, there is a free thought above that of the "freethinker"

This is freethinking, unconfin'd to *parts*,
To send the soul, on curious travel bent,
Through all the provinces of human thought,

Of this vast universe to make the tour,
In each recess of *space*, and *time*, at home,
Familiar with their wonders, diving deep,
And, like a prince of boundless interests *there*,
Still most ambitious of the most remote,
To look on *truth* unbroken, and entire⁵⁵

Coleridge might well have remembered these lines in *France an Ode* when he "shot his being through earth, sea, and air " Certainly Wordsworth remembered, though somewhat dimly, the following remarkable passage from *Night VI*

Sky-born, sky-guided, sky-returning race!
Erect, immortal, rational, divine!
In *senses* which inherit Earth, and Heavens,
Enjoy the various riches Nature yields,
Far nobler! *give* the riches they enjoy,
Give taste to fruits, and harmony to groves,
Their radiant beams to gold, and gold's bright fire,
Take in, at once, the landscape of the world,
At a small inlet, which a grain might close,
And half create the wondrous world they see⁵⁶
Our *senses*, as our *reason*, are divine
But for the magic organ's powerful charm,
Earth were a rude, uncolour'd chaos still

⁵³ *Night VIII*

⁵⁴ *Night I*

⁵⁵ *Night VII*

⁵⁶ This, as Wordsworth's footnote in *Tintern Abbey* shows, is the line that suggested
of all this mighty world
Of eye, and ear,—both what they half create,
And what perceive

Objects are but th' occasion, ours th' *exploit*,
 Ours is the cloth, the pencil, and the paint,
 Which Nature's admirable picture draws,
 And beautifies creation's ample dome
 Like Milton's Eve, when gazing on the lake,
 Man makes the matchless image, man admires

This conception of the divine creativeness of both the senses and the higher reason is much more significantly "romantic" than Young's melancholy. One is half inclined to believe, with Clark, that the theory of genius, as set forth in the *Conjectures*, "is the key to practically the whole of Young's philosophy."⁸⁷ But the real situation, I believe, can more accurately be expressed by saying that both the theory of genius and the more obviously religious transcendentalism of *Night Thoughts* are parallel or cognate developments from the type of Christianity which Young inherits. Historically regarded both express, in their different spheres, the sense of inward freedom, goodness, and power which is felt by the "elect" Christian. In *The Last Day*, a poem of impeccable Protestant orthodoxy, Young writes, after describing the final destruction of the universe

A mighty, mighty ruin! yet one *soul*
 Has more to boast, and far outweighs the whole,
 Exalted in superior excellence,
 Cast down to nothing, such a vast expense⁸⁸

For whom these revolutions, but for man?
 For him, Omnipotence new measures takes,
 For him, through all eternity, awakes,
 Pours on him gifts sufficient to supply
 Heaven's loss, and with fresh glories fill the sky
 Think deeply, then, O man, how *great* thou art,
 Pay thyself homage with a trembling heart,

Enter the sacred temple of thy breast,
 And gaze, and wander there, a ravish'd guest,
 Gaze on those hidden treasures thou shalt find,
 Wander through all the glories of thy mind⁸⁹

In both *Night Thoughts* and the *Conjectures*, Young follows the advice given in these deeply Protestant lines

⁸⁷ H. H. Clark, "A Study of Melancholy in Edward Young," *Modern Language Notes*, XXXIX, 199

⁸⁸ An amusing bourgeois variation of the liturgical "precious"?

⁸⁹ Book III

That man is both "a worm" and "a god" is a metaphor imbedded in the very heart of Christianity To understand it and use it rightly requires a spiritual equilibrium which, as I have argued elsewhere, a man of Young's religious inheritance is liable to lose⁸⁰ By the time Young reaches *Night Thoughts* the "worm" element, though it still retains much of its Christian meaning, has to a considerable extent become a pleasing emotional indulgence, a means of displaying sensibility and of achieving literary effects But the "god" element, since it flatters pride and produces an illusion of goodness and power, continues to be believed in quite seriously No longer effectually curbed by the "worm" element, it threatens to inflate itself and soar, a balloon of self-sufficiency, beyond the limits of Christian realism

Nowhere in Young, however, is this threat completely fulfilled He knows that man is a sinner, he fears hell, he has a more than merely sentimental sense of the blackness of an unbelieving life, he has not forgotten the meaning of the Cross, he believes in a God outside of himself, and this God is the God of the Scriptures Young, in short, is valuable for the present study not because he has parted company from Christianity but because he illustrates so convincingly the sentimental and romantic implications of the type of Christianity to which he still adheres

In the eighteenth century, what became of that reliance upon the Inner Light, the Holy Spirit speaking within the heart of man, which characterized the more enthusiastic, antinomian, and mystical Separatist sects of the seventeenth century? So far as the Age of Pope is concerned, an answer is given in Volume I "After the Restoration, and still more after the Revolution of 1688, the flame of sectarianism subsided In the Queen Anne period it burned very low indeed We hear of Muggletonians, and terms like 'Familist' and 'Seeker' continue to be applied, very vaguely, to dissenters who are regarded as fanatical A more recent group, the Philadelphians, seems to embody much of the old spirit, but it soon runs to seed There are Thomas Tryon and other scattered disciples of Boehme, admirers of the French Prophets, miscellaneous eccentrics But most sects of the 'ranting' type have gravitated toward the Particular Baptists, and most sects of the 'seeking' type toward the Quakers These two groups in turn have become sober, respectable, anxious to avoid the imputation of enthusiasm So far as the direct influence of the seventeenth-century sects

⁸⁰ The theme is implicit and often explicit throughout this study, but see especially the final chapter of Vol I, "Protestantism and Sentimentalism "

upon the eighteenth century is concerned, the most one can say is that they spread through certain sections of the middle class ideas which look forward to the religion of sentiment. Though for a time these ideas lost much of their force, they did not wholly disappear, and they rise again in an attenuated form with the rise of the bourgeois in the eighteenth century. For us, however, the sects are chiefly significant, not because of their direct influence, but because of the clarity and force with which they express tendencies which were widely though more obscurely pervasive among more temperate and conservative thinkers of the seventeenth century. They were simply the swiftest and most violent current in the general stream of thought."⁶¹

In the eighteenth century the Inner Light usually appears as natural goodness, the moral sense, taste, social love, or original genius. But there were those who retained the conception in its more primitive form, and they became somewhat more numerous and more articulate with the decay of rationalism during the period covered by this volume. The eighteenth-century "mystic," as he was often called, might be a Quaker, or a Moravian, or a Methodist. He might follow some obscure descendent of the French Prophets.⁶² Less probably, he might be an Evangelical. Though he would never be a middle-of-the-road Anglican, he might be a former Anglo-Catholic who had found no spiritual sustenance in the barren High Churchmanship of his day. But the mystic was too much of an Ishmaelite to feel perfectly at home in any of these groups. By its very nature institutionalized religion clashed with his inwardness and individualism. The Quakers had grown smugly respectable. The Moravians, besides being un-English, laid too much stress on externals. The Church of England, at its very lowest, remained a Church. The Methodists and Evangelicals, though they borrowed something from mystical literature, were in general opposed to the mystics because their confidence in the possession of the Holy Spirit blinded them to the necessity of conversion.

And so the mystic, though he might attend church or chapel or meeting, was essentially a lonely reader of books which, in one way or another, strengthened his belief in the supreme importance of the Inner Light. He had a rich and venerable tradition on which to draw. Dionysius the Areopagite, Eckhart, Tauler, Suso, the *Theologia Germanica*, Reformation and

⁶¹ I, 554

⁶² See I, 451 and 554

seventeenth-century sectarian tracts, the *Kabbala*, "Hiel,"⁶⁸ Jakob Boehme,⁶⁴ the Cambridge Platonists, Malebranche, John Norris of Bemerton, Guyon, Bourignon, Thomas Tryon, Swedenborg, and much else. To be well saturated in this sort of reading was to be a "mystic."

The historical significance of such material would be more apparent if this study included Blake, but as a poet who flourished after 1780 he has been reserved for treatment among his romantic compeers. The poetry of our period is almost completely out of touch with the mystical tradition. The mystics were few in number, obscure, and widely scattered. There was no public for them and hence no publisher. Even in prose their ideas found expression only in a few neglected books like Thomas Hartley's *Defence of the Mystics*.⁶⁵ The chief exception to this statement is the famous William Law,⁶⁶ who in the final stage of his development was one-quarter nonjuring Anglo-Catholic, one-quarter teacher of practical Christian conduct, and one-half follower of Boehme. Readers of Volume I will remember that Law's mysticism exerted some influence on the writings of Henry Brooke,⁶⁷ but an even more devoted disciple of Law is the subject of the following pages.

Those who know something of John Byrom (1692-1763) will appreciate the difficulties which now confront me. Of the four volumes which constitute A. W. Ward's edition, two are devoted entirely to "divine" verse, and many pieces in the other volumes have some bearing on our subject. Although Byrom shows occasional gleams of emotional and imaginative power, he seldom tries to meet even the contemporary standard of poetic utterance: he thought of verse chiefly as a means of expressing ideas with memorable compactness—an aim which is frustrated by his immense volubility. His more important poems demand knowledge of theological controversies which lie beyond the scope of this study. He so frequently

⁶⁸ A name used by the author of several mystical books and tracts published in French and Low Dutch at Leyden about 1580, and republished in German at Amsterdam, 1687-1690. The author, whom William Law ranked next to Boehme among the mystics, was probably Hendrik Janson, an uneducated Dutch workman. In 1781 Francis Okely, a Moravian disciple of Law, published a small volume of selections translated into English from the German edition (Stephen Hobhouse, *William Law and Eighteenth-Century Quakerism*, p. 249 and n).

⁶⁴ See Karl Closs, 'Jakob Boehmes Aufnahme in England,' *Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprachen und Literaturen*, CXLVIII, 18-27.

⁶⁵ First a disciple of Law, he later became the chief English translator and interpreter of Swedenborg.

⁶⁶ See J. H. Overton, *William Law, Nonjuror and Mystic*.

⁶⁷ See I, 475-83.

paraphrases William Law that at times one hardly knows whether one is discussing the master or the pupil. These few paragraphs, therefore, are anything but an exhaustive treatment of this perplexing figure.

The external circumstances of his life are simple enough. Byrom came of an old country family which had long been identified with the neighbourhood of Manchester, but his branch of the clan had gone into trade in the city itself. His father was a prosperous linendraper. At Merchant Taylors' School and at Trinity College, Cambridge, young Byrom proved a good scholar. On leaving Cambridge he went to France for his health and returned an admirer of Malebranche and Bourignon. After marrying his cousin he taught his own system of shorthand in order to support her, but on the death of his elder brother he inherited a modest fortune and thereafter lived quietly in Manchester. Byrom was a good-natured, merry, convivial fellow whose sins were trifling but who frequently reproached himself for falling short of his own exacting standards. The line, "Let us mix Metaphysics, and Short-hand, and port,"⁸⁸ symbolizes the amiable, uncritical clutter of his life. He had a pious heart and a nimble, curious mind, but he lacked depth and solidity. Very suggestible, he was a born hero-worshipper and "seeker," and something of a crank.

The gentry of Manchester, like those of Lancashire in general, were tinged with Jacobitism. Byrom was never a strong adherent of the House of Hanover.

God bless the King—I mean the Faith's Defender,
God bless—no Harm in blessing—the Pretender,
But who Pretender is, or who is King—
God bless us all! that's quite another Thing

The politics of his environment had ecclesiastical implications. Unlike some of his Manchester friends he did not hesitate to take the oaths, but he maintained to the end something of the High Churchmanship of his early days. In nothing is the strength of the main trend of eighteenth-century religious thought more clearly shown than in its ability first to Protestantize and finally to sentimentalize the faith of Anglo-Catholics like William Law. To some extent his disciple illustrates the same process. Though it seems probable that Byrom's High Churchmanship was more anti-Hanoverian than pro-Catholic, the ideal of the Church plays some part in his poems.

He is, for example, a great admirer of Bishop Ken both as prelate and

⁸⁸ *To Henry Wright of Mobberly, Esq., on Buying the Picture of Father Malebranche at a Sale*

poet⁶⁹ Like Ken, he writes a good many poems suggested by the course of the Christian Year *The Collect for Advent Sunday, Hymns for Christmas Day, On the Epiphany, Meditations for Every Day in Passion Week,*⁷⁰ *On Whitsunday, On Trinity Sunday* In one of the two Christmas hymns he dwells on the Virgin Birth with an awareness of its theological import which is rare in his period

Mary, prepar'd for such a chaste embrace,
Was destin'd to this miracle of grace,
In her unfolded the mysterious plan
Of man's salvation, God's becoming man,
His power with her humility combin'd,
Produc'd the sinless Saviour of mankind

When defending the continuous operation of the Holy Spirit against Warburton, he does not hesitate to appeal to the authority of the Catholic Church

By reformation from the church of Rome
We mean, from faults and errors, I presume,
Against her truths to prosecute a war
Is protestant aversion push'd too far

The Church of England, he continues, is united with the Church of Rome in believing

that Christ has given to his bride,
His holy church, an ever present guide⁷¹

Yet even if the Anglican Church of Byrom's day had been less smug, mechanical, and unspiritual, he would probably have been a restless member of the flock At first glance, the following lines seem to deserve universal approval

Church unity is held, and faith's increase,
By that of spirit, in the bond of peace,
And righteousness of life, without this tie
Forms are in vain prescrib'd to worship by,
Or temples model'd, hearts, as well as hands,
An holy church, and catholic, demands⁷²

⁶⁹ *A Letter to a Lady, Occasioned by Her Desiring the Author to Revise and Polish the Poems of Bishop Ken* He declares himself unworthy to do so For a discussion of Ken's poems, see I, 98-106

⁷⁰ Curiously, Byrom uses this term as equivalent to "Holy Week"

⁷¹ *Familiar Epistles to a Friend*

⁷² *On Church Communion, In Seven Parts* from a *Letter of Mr Law's* Freely paraphrased from the second letter in Vol II of the 1769 edition of Law's *Works* Here and elsewhere I rely for information as to such points on A W Ward's edition of *The Poems of John Byrom* See also *A Dying Speech From Mr Law*

But on closer analysis the implied proposition that external religion derives its worth from internal religion reveals an ambiguity. If it asserts that forms are nothing without spirit, it is obviously true. But if it denies that there are religious values completely independent of human feeling, and that these values are communicated to the believer *from the outside* by a Church which is the creation of a transcendent God, then the proposition is merely a piece of enthusiasm which the Churchman must reject. Doubtless Byrom intends to assert the former sense of the proposition, but the pressure of the *Zeitgeist*, added to something in his own nature, drew him toward the latter meaning.

Similarly in *An Expostulation with a Zealous Sectarist, Who Inveighed in Bitter Terms Against the Clergy and Church Institutions* Byrom defends the Church only by begging the dissenter to be less bigoted. "Heart-worship" is the great thing, and no religious communion can claim a monopoly of that. It extends, as he says in another poem, even beyond the boundaries of Christianity.

Whatever forms or ceremonies spring
From custom's force, there lies the real thing
Jew, Turk, or Christian, be the lover's name,
If same the love, religion is the same.⁷³

The author of *The Universal Prayer* would not disagree.

Thus although Byrom never ceased to regard himself as a loyal son of the Church of England, he was always in search of the prophet who would most compellingly reveal the gospel of "heart-worship." In the early years of his married life he sampled various religious points of view. As Hobhouse says, "He was friendly with Dissenters and Romanists, he consorted with Deists, and we have records of his attending the gatherings of several of the Nonconformist bodies"—Baptists, Moravians, Methodists.⁷⁴ In his reading he turned from Malebranche to Guyon and Bourignon, and finally to Law's *Serious Call*. He met Law in 1729, the year in which that work was published, and soon became his personal "laureate." As Law plunged more and more deeply into the intricacies of Behmenism, Byrom followed loyally but without pretending to understand everything that he was told. He applies to Boehme Socrates' remark on the darkness of Heraclitus:

All that I understand is good and true,
And what I don't is, I believe, so too.⁷⁵

⁷³ *Divine Love, the Essential Characteristic of True Religion*

⁷⁴ *William Law and Eighteenth-Century Quakerism*, p. 112

⁷⁵ *Socrates' Reply, Concerning Heraclitus' Writings*

Shunning Boehme's strange nature symbolism, he extracted from "the goodness of his plainer page" what was little more than a high-pitched mystagogical expression of Pauline Christianity combined with a Quakerish insistence on the Inner Light

A detailed investigation of Byrom's direct and indirect indebtedness to Boehme demands a more exhaustive study of both the poet and the mystic than can here be attempted. Explicit evidence, of course, is provided by such pieces as *A Poetical Version of a Letter, from Jacob Behmen, to a Friend*.⁷⁰ Temptation, says Boehme through Byrom, is in a way a sign of grace, since it represents a conflict between Christ and Satan in the heart. An especially subtle form of temptation occurs when even the illuminated soul falls into sin from a selfish desire to possess the divine light for itself. This selfishness "must be transmuted to a love desire," but the attempt to do so causes much doubt and wavering. The only remedy is utter subjection of the mind to Christ's love. This means, as Byrom says in an original poem which depends more directly upon St. Paul, that "Salvation is the life of Christ in us."

He follows William Law in *An Epistle to a Gentleman of the Temple* (1749),⁷¹ where he attacks Sherlock's observation that Adam, contrary to God's warning, did not die after tasting the forbidden fruit. Byrom retorts that Adam *did* die in the only important sense of the word, for he underwent

Death to his pristine, spirit-life divine,
And separation from its sacred throne

We sons of Adam are sharers in this death

This husk of ours, this stately stalking clod,
Is not the body that we have from God
Of good and evil 'tis the mortal crust,
Fruit of Adamical and Evil lust,
By which the man, when heav'nly life was ceas'd,
Became an helpless, naked, biped beast

From this death we can be redeemed to Adam's original state of spiritual life by

that *only* help of man forlorn,
The incarnation of the Virgin-born

⁷⁰ Drawn from an English translation, 1649, of thirty-three of the *Theosophische Sendbriefe*

⁷¹ See Ward's edition, II, 138-44, for the controversial background of this poem. It contrasts Law's *Spirit of Prayer* with the Appendix to Sherlock's *Dissertation on the Sense of the Ancients before Christ on the Circumstances and Consequences of the Fall*. Sherlock, a typical logic chopper, was one of Byrom's pet aversions.

But, in general agreement with the mystical tradition, the Incarnation is less an event in history than a happy feeling in the breast. Similarly the "divine ascent" of love is

Not to the skies or stars, but to the part
That will be always uppermost—the heart ⁷⁸

The complete *inwardness* of Christ is a favorite theme

Stones toward the earth descend,
Rivers to the ocean roll,
Every motion has some end
What is thine, beloved soul?

Mine is, where my Saviour is,
There with him I hope to dwell
Jesu is the central bliss,
Love the force that doth impel ⁷⁹

The image is gravitational: love does not send the soul outward, but pulls it deeper and deeper toward its own lost centre. As Novalis, another reader of Boehme, was to say, "Nach innen geht der geheimnisvolle Weg."

God, Byrom believes, is all love

'Tis our own darkness, wrath, sin, death, and Hell,
Not to love him, who first lov'd us so well ⁸⁰

In another poem what men call God's anger is explained in more technically Behmenistic terms

The wrath of God, in us, that is, the fire
Of burning life, without the love-desire,
Without the light, which Jesus came to raise,
And change the wrath into a joyful blaze ⁸¹

Byrom's mysticism combines with the remnants of his High Churchmanship to make him detest the doctrine of predestination

Free to receive the grace, or to reject,
Receivers only can be God's elect,
Rejecters of it reprobate alone,
Not by divine decree, but by their own ⁸²

⁷⁸ *Divine Love, the Essential Characteristic of True Religion*

⁷⁹ *The Soul's Tendency Toward Its True Centre*. An unusually favorable example of Byrom's religious lyricism, which must otherwise be neglected. *A Divine Pastoral* (a paraphrase of the Twenty-third Psalm) and his hymns, *Christians, awake* and *My spirit longs for thee*, also have some merit.

⁸⁰ *On the Meaning of the Word Wrath, as Applied to God in Scripture*

⁸¹ *Tuesday in Passion Week*

⁸² *Universal Good the Object of the Divine Will, and Evil the Necessary Effect of the Creature's Opposition to It*

The Calvinistic position is simply unthinkable

That ever Christians, blest with revelation,
Should think of his decreeing men's damnation,
The God of love! the fountain of all good!

He will hear nothing of the Evangelicals' attempt to prove that Anglican theology is Calvinistic and that Arminianism is popish. He objects to their canonizing

reforming saints of old,
Because they held the doctrines that you hold,
For if they did, altho' of saint-like stem,
In this plain point we must reform from them
While freed from Rome, we are not tied, I hope,
To what is wrong in a Geneva pope.⁸³

One of the many persons with whom William Law engaged in controversy was Bishop Warburton. "Warburton," as his biographer observes, "was a latitudinarian and a Whig, Law a High-Churchman and a Non-juror. Warburton was fundamentally a rationalist, and Law nothing if not a mystic. Warburton's philosophy was in the main derived from Locke, for whom he had an almost unqualified admiration. Law regarded Locke's denial of innate ideas as a pernicious doctrine, antagonistic to his most deeply cherished convictions."⁸⁴ Since on all these points Byrom agreed with his master, he himself had more than one brush with the bishop.⁸⁵ A particularly repugnant idea of Warburton's was voiced in a sermon of about 1750 and enlarged upon in *The Doctrine of Grace* (1762). "Warburton contended that although the extraordinary operation of the Holy Spirit had continued through the Apostolic age, its course had been fulfilled when the canon of Scripture was completed, and examples of its influence were not to be looked for in modern times."⁸⁶ To argue thus was to deny the validity of "mystical" religion. For Law and Byrom, as for Boehme, the inner Christ and the indwelling Holy Spirit were simply two ways of expressing the same subjective illumination. The Spirit was not in the Bible; it was in them, providing the light upon which the Bible depended for its meaning.

Byrom assailed Warburton's views in *Familiar Epistles to a Friend* and

⁸³ *Thoughts on Predestination and Reprobation*

⁸⁴ A. W. Evans, *Warburton and the Warburtonians*, p. 216

⁸⁵ See the index of Ward's edition

⁸⁶ Evans, *Warburton and the Warburtonians*, pp. 236-37

*A Stricture on the Rev Mr Warburton's Doctrine of Grace*⁸⁷ Divines like Warburton, he says,

think that, now, religion's sole defence
Is learning, history, and critic sense

at work upon the Scriptures⁸⁸ But this is not what our Lord has promised

"The comforter," Christ said, "will come unto,
Abide with, dwell in," (not your books, but) "you"
Just as absurd an ink and paper throne
For God's abode, as one of wood or stone
If to adore an image be idolatry,
To deify a book is bibliolatry⁸⁹

Characteristically, Byrom attacks this position from two mutually exclusive points of view In *Familiar Epistles*, as a passage already quoted has shown,⁹⁰ he appeals to the witness of the Spirit-guided Church But in *A Stricture* he takes the line of the seventeenth-century sectarian enthusiast

The Spirit's indwelling, by th' attesting pen
Of all th' inspired, is in the hearts of men

He is even more explicit in another poem on the same theme, where he says that he loves the Bible,

But for the real, understanding part,
The books of books is ev'ry man's own heart⁹¹

Taking Byrom's work as a whole, his Anglican Churchmanship is much weaker than this pure and unalloyed Protestantism of the sort which neither Calvinistic nor Lutheran theology had ever been able to curb

This constant appeal to "heart worship" entails a very extreme and persistent anti-intellectualism Byrom declares that St Paul, before his conversion, was a "reas'ning, legal, moral zealot," but he learned at last

That true religion had its true foundation,
Not in man's reason, but God's revelation⁹²

⁸⁷ They raise puzzling bibliographical questions which are discussed in Ward's edition, II, 247-49 and 274-76 In these poems Byrom does not paraphrase any particular work of Law's but depends closely upon his ideas

⁸⁸ *Familiar Epistles to a Friend*

⁸⁹ *A Stricture on the Rev Mr Warburton's Doctrine of Grace*

⁹⁰ See p 153

⁹¹ The second of two poems *On the Disposition of Mind Requisite for the Right Use and Understanding of the Holy Scriptures*

⁹² *On the Conversion of St Paul*

To chop logic is to be spiritually dead with the fallen Adam

I muse, I doubt, I reason, and debate—
Therefore, I am not in that perfect state,
In which, when its creation first began,
God plac'd his own beloved image, man,
From whose high birth, at once design'd for all,
This ever poring reason proves a fall⁸³

For whatever else the serpent in Eden may have been, he was assuredly

A critic, that employ'd his fatal skill
To cavil upon words, and take away
The sense of that which was as plain as day⁸⁴

Too many preachers play the serpent's part, Byrom thinks as he listens
to a sermon "Upon the Operation of the Holy Spirit"

While he went on, and learnedly perplex
The genuine meaning of his chosen text,
I cast my eyes above him, and explor'd
The dove-like form upon the sounding board

That bird, thought I, was put there as a sign
What kind of spirit guides a good divine
Such as, at first, taught preachers to impart
The pure and simple gospel to the heart

But now,

Of heads so fatten'd, and of hearts so starv'd,
A different emblem should, methinks, be carved,
The owl of Athens, and not Sion's dove,
The bird of learning—not the bird of love⁸⁵

As plants need the outward light of the sun, so both sense and reason
"want an inward light" the very existence of which is denied by "these
reason-worshippers"

Enthusiastic heat—their fav'rite theme
Draws their attention to the cold extreme,
Their fears of torrid fervours freeze a soul⁸⁶

⁸³ *A Soliloquy on the Cause and Consequence of a Doubting Mind*

⁸⁴ *To a Gentleman of the Temple*

⁸⁵ *An Answer to Some Inquiries, Concerning the Author's Opinions of a Sermon*

⁸⁶ *Thoughts upon Human Reason, Occasioned by Reading Some Extravagant Declamations in Its Favor*

It is not surprising, then, that Byrom's most ambitious effort should be a defense of *Enthusiasm* (1752)⁹⁷ The poem would deserve closer attention were it not a faithful paraphrase of Law's *Some Animadversions upon Dr Trapp's Reply*, a polemic appended to his famous *Appeal to All That Doubt* (1740) Neither the original nor Byrom's poem is especially Behmenistic except in using the metaphor of an inward flame which may be put to good or evil uses according to its subjection to "love desire" Byrom begins by saying that the outcry against enthusiasm is a "common cant" which often makes us

fly from what we know we want,
A deeper sense of something that should set
The heart at rest, that never has done yet,
Some simpler secret, that, yet unreveal'd,
Amidst contending systems lies conceal'd

Enthusiasm is simply "thought enkindled to an high degree" Since every man who feels strongly about anything is an enthusiast,

That which concerns us therefore is to see
What species of enthusiasts we be,
On what materials the fiery source
Of thinking life shall execute its force

For the inward fire is the creative will, it is imagination, it is what will later be called the transcendental faculty

'Tis will, imagination, and desire
Of thinking life, that constitute the fire,
The force, by which the strong volitions drive,
And form the scenes to which we are alive

Once fix the will, and nature must begin
T' unfold its active rudiments within,
Mind governs matter, and it must obey
To all its opening forms desire is key

Imagination, trifling as it seems,
Big with effects, its own creation teems
We think our wishes and desires a play,
And sport important faculties away
Edg'd are the tools with which we trifle thus,
And carve out deep realities for us
Intention, roving into Nature's field,

⁹⁷ For the background facts see Ward's edition, II, 168-79

Dwells in that system which it means to build,
 Itself the centre of its wish'd-for plan,
 For where the heart of man is—there is man
 Ev'ry created, understanding mind
 Moves as its own self-bias is inclined
 From God's free spirit breathed forth to be,
 It must of all necessity be free,
 Must have the pow'r to kindle and inflame
 The subject-matter of its mental aim
 Whether it bend the voluntary view,
 Realities, or fictions, to pursue
 Whether it raise its nature, or degrade,
 To truth substantial, or to phantom shade,
 Falsehood or truth accordingly obtains,
 That only which it wills to gain—it gains⁹⁸

These lines are even bolder in their transcendentalism than the passage from *Night Thoughts* remembered by Wordsworth⁹⁹ Though their kinship is unmistakable, Byrom draws upon a purer, more uncompromising heritage of enthusiastic inwardness than does Young Even disregarding his indebtedness to Law, Byrom is anything but an important mystic His historical interest, however, is great In him, Protestant mysticism of the Inner Light points toward the romantic faith in those "important faculties" which, reigning imperiously over matter, "carve out deep realities for us"

Even by persons well versed in the eighteenth century, Christopher Smart (1722-1771) is generally summed up as a bibulous hack writer who went mad and wrote *A Song to David* That poem, however, they rightly consider the most powerful religious lyric between Traherne and Blake Its appeal derives partly from the suddenness with which it flares out against the drab background of the age, and from the touches of eccentricity which, combined with our knowledge of poor Kit's life, give it a kind of clinical fascination, but its genuine claims to fame are based on firmer grounds If this is the poem of a madman, one wishes that such insanity were more common It is the ecstatic outpouring of an intense religious

⁹⁸ To show the extent of Byrom's indebtedness, I quote from Law's treatise as cited in Ward's edition, II, 180 "In Will, Imagination, and Desire consists the Life, or fiery Driving, of every intelligent Creature And as every intelligent Creature is its own *Self-mover*, so every intelligent Creature has power of *kindling* and *inflaming* its Will, Imagination, and Desire, as it pleases, with Shadows, Fictions, or Realities, with things carnal or spiritual, temporal or eternal And *this kindling* of the Will, Imagination, and Desire, when raised into a *ruling Degree* of Life is properly that which is to be understood by Enthusiasm "

⁹⁹ See p 147

emotion in images of thrilling strangeness and intensity And this prayer is also a poem, a work of art It is beautifully constructed, its patterns of thought, rhythm, and verbal melody are woven by the hand of a master Less creative paraphrasers of Psalm CXLVIII, especially Thomson in his *Hymn*, had united nature and man in praise of God, but they had not taken the theme deeply into their own hearts, and they had been too ready to interpret the original in the light of the contemporary religion of nature Smart does not reduce Christianity to the level of nature he redeems nature by raising it to the level of Christian supernaturalism His mysticism is not pantheistic but Franciscan

The swallow also dwells with thee,
O man of God's humility,
Within his Saviour's Church

The adoring congregation of plants and minerals and lions and lizards and whales and men, which seems at first an indiscriminate medley, reveals at last a truly religious scale of values Sweeter than the strains of the turtle-dove are the strains of David's gratitude Stronger than the whale is David as "man of prayer" More beautiful than the bridal morn is "The Shepherd King upon his knees" And the temptation to glorify David, and through him the modern poet, as an original genius is resisted to the end¹⁰⁰ David—or man—is glorious only as believing in

Him, that brought salvation down
By meekness, call'd thy Son,
Thou that stupendous truth believ'd,
And now the matchless deed's achiev'd,
Determin'd, dar'd, and done

One can argue that Smart's Christianity was incomplete and imperfectly balanced, but one cannot deny that it was authentic within its limits and that it produced at least one very noble poem

It is bewildering to turn from *A Song to David* to the dramatic trifles, satires, occasional and complimentary pieces, pseudo-Pindaric odes, imitations of the *Georgics*, fables, epigrams, prologues and epilogues, and translations which compose the bulk of Smart's work They seem to have been written by a different person A careful sifting of the slag heap would somewhat diminish this impression of dual personality but at too great

¹⁰⁰ Smart seems deficient in awareness of sin, and his praises express the joy of one who is rather too certain of salvation Nevertheless his confidence and thankfulness are humble, and he is quite without any transcendental bumptiousness

an expenditure of space. It will be more profitable to concentrate upon a few religious poems which enable us to interpret *A Song to David* not as an isolated outburst but as the final expression of feelings which the poet had cherished from the beginning of his thwarted career.

Smart's mental and physical health was delicate, he drank excessively and had no sense in financial matters, he usually wrote to keep his head above water. He was always, however, a deeply pious man. On both sides of his family he came of famous old puritan stock. Though for some reason unknown to us his father abandoned an early ambition to take holy orders, he imparted to his son lessons which were not forgotten at Cambridge.

Mr Brittain seems unquestionably right in ascribing to Smart an anonymous poem entitled *The Benedicite Paraphrased*, which appeared on December 6, 1746—the year after Smart received his Pembroke fellowship—in Dodsley's *The Museum, or Literary and Historical Register*.¹⁰¹ The external evidence, though strong, is less conclusive than such stanzas as these

Light,—from whose Ray all Beauty springs,
 Darkness,—whose wide-expanded Wings
 Involve the dusky Globe,
 Praise him, who, when the Heav'ns he spread,
 Darkness his thick Pavillion made,
 And Light his regal Robe

Ye Whales, that stir the boiling Deep,
 Or in its dark Recesses sleep,
 Remote from human Eye,
 Praise him, by whom ye all are fed,
 Praise him, without whose heavenly Aid
 Ye languish, faint, and die

Praise him, ye Beasts, that Nightly roam
 Amid the solitary Gloom,
 Th' expected Prey to seize,
 Ye Slaves of the laborious Plough,
 Your stubborn Necks submissive bow,
 And bend your weary'd Knees

Here are the content, the pattern, and clear foretokenings of the style of *A Song to David*

¹⁰¹ Robert E. Brittain, "An Early Model for Smart's *A Song to David*," *PMLA*, LVI, 165-74. The poem is printed entire.

I agree also with Mr Brittain's conclusion that this poem "establishes once and for all that *A Song to David* is no miracle of insanity, but a perfectly logical development of Smart's natural bent. It suggests that *The Hop-Garden*, the *Midwife*, the clever epigrams and witty lyrics—in short, virtually all the poetry included in the 1791 'Collected Poems'—are really extraneous from the main stream of his work. The period of confinement gave him rest and a chance to write as he pleased. His natural talent was for the composition of religious verse of an unusual and very high order, and that talent, first strongly apparent in the *Benedicite Paraphrased*, finds its ultimate expression in the great *Song*."¹⁰² This thesis, I should like to add, is confirmed by the poems with which Smart won the Seatonian prize in 1750, 1751, 1752, 1753, and 1755. Although they concede much to the judges' love of inflated oratory in Miltonic blank verse, they are very different from the Seatonian poems which we have previously examined.¹⁰³ They are clearly the work of the man who had written *The Benedicite Paraphrased* and who would later write the *Song*.

In hymning *The Eternity of the Supreme Being* (1750), Smart hails God as "Great Poet of the Universe" and as "Architect of countless worlds." The divine creativeness is still at work

Avaunt the dust-directed crawling thought,
That puissance immeasurably vast,
And bounty inconceivable cou'd rest
Content, exhausted with one week of action—
No—in th' exertion of thy righteous pow'r,
Ten thousand times more active than the Sun,
Thou reign'd, and with a mighty hand compos'd
Systems innumerable, matchless all,
All stamp'd with thine uncounterfeited seal

But although Smart regards the Newtonian universe with religious awe, he is never content with mere Newtonianism. All these worlds within worlds will crumble on the last day, leaving the only two eternal—God and the human soul. Then—how characteristic of Smart—adoration will be adoration indeed

'Tis then, nor sooner, that the deathless soul
Shall justly know its nature and its rise
'Tis then the human tongue new-tun'd shall give
Praises more worthy the eternal ear

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 174

¹⁰³ See pp. 64–68

Smart prays that his heart may be purified and made worthy to utter such praise

But he could not wait for Judgment Day Even now the world was full of creatures which, as Parnell had said,

speak their Maker as they can,
But want and ask the tongue of man

The title of the 1751 prize poem, *On the Immensity of the Supreme Being*, is somewhat misleading, for its real theme is divine omnipresence God is "Alike in all his universe the same" He is in the starry sky He is on the ocean and beneath its waves

Oh! cou'd I search the bosom of the sea,
Down the great depth descending, there thy works
Wou'd also speak thy residence, and there
Wou'd I thy servant, like thy still profound,
Astonish'd into silence muse thy praise!
Behold! behold! th' unplanted garden round
Of vegetable coral, sea-flow'rs gay,
And shrubs, with amber, from the pearl-pav'd bottom
Rise richly varied, where the finny race
In blithe security their gambols play
While high above their heads Leviathan,
The terror and the glory of the main,
His pastime takes with transport, proud to see
The ocean's vast dominion all his own

Already hand in hand with David, the poet imaginatively descends into "the genial bowels of the Earth,"

To undermine the treasure-fertile womb
Of the huge Pyrenean, to detect
The agate and the deep-entrenched gem
Of kindred jasper

Here too is God, no less than on the mountaintop or on the plains, where the ringdove's nest shames the unbeliever But even if such evidence were nonexistent,

Yet man at home, within himself, might find
The Deity immense, and in that frame,
So fearfully, so wonderfully made,
See and adore his providence and pow'r—

I see, and I adore—O God most bounteous!
O infinite of Goodness and of Glory!

And thy own image, the immortal soul,
Shall consecrate herself to thee for ever

The voice of humble gratitude, which "To pious ears sounds silverly so sweet," is heard again in *On the Omniscience of the Supreme Being* (1752) Once more Smart treats the assigned theme as he pleases, confining himself mainly to a topic which always fascinated him—the workings of instinct in the lower animals

What is that secret pow'r, that guides the brutes,
Which ignorance calls instinct? 'Tis from thee,
It is the operation of thine hands,
Immediate, instantaneous, 'tis thy wisdom,
That glorious shines transparent thro' thy works

The point is embroidered with a good deal of that expert minuteness which appears in the *Song* and even more abundantly in *Rejoice in the Lamb* Man's lack of this intuitive wisdom, he concludes, bears witness to his fallen condition, nevertheless the spectacle of God's goodness to the brutes justifies hope for ourselves

In 1753 Smart again carried off the Seatonian prize with his poem *On the Power of the Supreme Being* The theme is illustrated by thunder, earthquakes, hurricanes, and the marvels of electricity

Survey the magnet's sympathetic love,
That woos the yielding needle, contemplate
Th' attractive amber's pow'r, invisible
Ev'n to the mental eye, or when the blow
Sent from th' electric sphere assaults thy frame,
Show me the hand that dealt it!—baffled here
By his omnipotence, Philosophy
Slowly her thoughts inadequate revolves

As usual, Smart employs science to show the incomprehensibility rather than the rationality of the divine attributes Hence from wonders "Rul'd by establish'd laws and current nature" he passes with no sense of incongruity to the miracles of the Old Testament But these in turn give place to the supreme miracle—God's saving love given to man through the Son From electricity to Joshua to Redemption—the sequence is typical of the man

In 1755, after an interval of one year, the judges awarded Smart the prize for the last time. The date of *On the Goodness of the Supreme Being* is significant, for Smart was then on the verge of an illness which was at least partly mental.¹⁰⁴ The poem gives no unmistakable warning of that fact, but it is more agitated and more sensuous than his earlier Seatonian poems, besides making freer use of the sort of material which forms the ground-work of the *Song*. In that connection the Miltonic invocation to David is noteworthy, for it shows why the psalmist was Smart's ideal poet:

Orpheus, for so the Gentiles call'd thy name,
Israel's sweet psalmist, who alone could wake
Th' inanimate to motion, who alone
The joyful hillocks, the applauding rocks,
And floods with musical persuasion drew,
Thou, who to hail and snow gav'st voice and sound,
And madst the mute melodious!

That was the aim finally achieved in *A Song to David*—to give inanimate nature and the lower animals a voice with which they could join man in praising God.

Such is also his aim in this prize poem. He begins his thanksgiving with light, without which the pansies

Might as well change their triple boast, the white,
The purple, and the gold, that far outvie
The eastern monarch's garb, ev'n with the dock,
Ev'n with the baneful hemlock's irksome green.¹⁰⁵

It is light, too, that inspires the birds to sing their thanks. Their worship is pleasing to their Maker:

He feeds his sweet musicians,—nor neglects
Th' invoking ravens in the greenwood wide,
And though their throats coarse rattling hurt the ear,
They mean it all for music, thanks and praise
They mean, and leave ingratitude to man.

But not all men are ungrateful. Smart next paints a scene in a cathedral, with the organ pealing, the sun glinting through the "storied panes," and

¹⁰⁴ The attack referred to in *Hymn to the Supreme Being, On Recovery from a Dangerous Fit of Illness* (1756).

¹⁰⁵ Compare a line quoted above from *The Benedicite Paraphrased*: "Light, from whose Ray all Beauty springs."

the heart of the worshipper passing from melancholy to joy This is the home of

The cherub gratitude,—behold her eyes!
 With love and gladness weepingly they shed
 Ecstatic smiles, the incense, that her hands
 Uprear, is sweeter than the breath of May
 Caught from the nectarine's blossom, and her voice
 Is more than tongue can tell

These lines are a little too soft, but the nectarine is authentic Smart

The second half of the poem includes a luxuriously imagined pageant in which Asia, Africa, and finally Christian Europe offer thanks and praise The following passage, for all its self-conscious Miltonism, looks forward to Smart's masterpiece

Bow down, ye elephants, submissive bow
 To him, who made the mite, though, Asia's pride,
 Ye carry armies on your tow'r-crown'd backs,
 And grace the turban'd tyrants, bow to him
 Who is as great, as perfect, and as good
 In his less striking wonders, till at length
 The eye's at fault and seeks the assisting glass

Unless my taste has been utterly corrupted by immersion in rubbish, Smart's Seatonian pieces are religious poems of some intrinsic value They are useful also in refuting a merely catastrophic interpretation of *A Song to David* Thomas Seaton's will was a blessing to Smart, for it enabled him to make money and express his religious temper at the same time

But the boon was no longer to be enjoyed A non-Seatonian poem of 1756, *Hymn to the Supreme Being, On Recovery from a Dangerous Fit of Illness*, reveals that Smart has been severely shaken in body and mind Its uneven, repetitious expression and especially its poor construction make it much feebler than the *Song*, but it was obviously written by the same man Toward the close he moves in one of his favorite ascending sequences from gold to the diamond, to the rose, to the eagle, to the lion, and then—

What can with great Leviathan compare,
 Who takes his pastime in the mighty main?
 What, like the Sun, shines thro' the realms of air,
 And gilds and glorifies th' ethereal plain?
 Yet what are these to man, who bears the sway,
 For all was made for him—to serve and to obey

When Smart was confined as insane in 1759, he simply continued to work upon his accustomed theme. A detailed account of the strange document which its modern editor has entitled *Rejoice in the Lamb*¹⁰⁶ cannot be attempted here. Utterly mad as it is, there is method in its madness. "For by the grace of God," cries poor Kit, "I am the Reviver of Adoration amongst English-Men." Throughout perhaps half of the manuscript he couples men with beasts, plants, or inorganic objects in gratitude to the Creator. "Let Chalcol praise with the Beetle, whose life is precious in the sight of God, though his appearance is against him." For such ugliness God's love provides compensations. "For a Toad hath by means of his eye the most beautiful prospects of any other animal to make him amends for his distance from his Creator in Glory."

Interwoven with his reflections are bits of intercessory prayer which are none the less touching for being suggested by irrational associations. "Let Campanus rejoice with the Lobster—God be gracious to all the Campbells especially John." But if to be mad is to think only of oneself, Smart was beautifully sane when he wrote, "For I pray the Lord Jesus that cured the Lunatick to be merciful to all my brothers and sisters in these houses."

A corollary of universal adoration is the omnipresence of God, a Seatonian idea to which Smart here frequently returns. "For the Life of God is in the Loadstone. For the blessing of God upon the grass is in shades of Green visible to a nice observer as they light upon the surface of the earth. For BULL in the first place is the word of Almighty God. For the warp and woof of flowers are worked by perpetual moving spirits. For flowers are peculiarly the poetry of Christ."

In his notes to *Rejoice in the Lamb*, Mr. Stead observes many parallels between the nature symbolism of Smart and that of "such writers as Pythagoras, Hermes, the Cabalists, Cornelius Agrippa, Eugenius Philalethes, and Henry More the Cambridge Platonist." He later mentions Boehme and Swedenborg in the same connection, but does not attempt to prove the influence of any particular occultist upon the poet. "My illustrations are intended only to show the community of thought between Smart and the authors of these various kinds of esoteric philosophy. That he was acquainted with some of their writings, and found them congenial is, I think, beyond question."¹⁰⁷ One could wish for more positive evidence, but the

¹⁰⁶ *Rejoice in the Lamb: A Song from Bedlam*, ed. W. F. Stead. "Jubilate Agno" is Smart's own caption for one of the longer sections.

¹⁰⁷ *Rejoice in the Lamb*, pp. 37-39.

hypothesis provides a very probable explanation of what would otherwise be mysterious

Whatever his sources may have been, Smart here, even more strikingly than in the work of saner days, possesses that view of nature which is often described as "sacramental." The term in this context is always a little disturbing to those who would define it more sharply and who observe that a universe in which everything is sacramental inevitably becomes a universe in which there are no sacraments. But insofar as the term implies a completely transcendent God who is immanent in nature without losing Himself in the symbols which convey His love to man, it expresses an essential feature of Smart's religious experience. "For the sin against the Holy Ghost is ingratitude," Smart writes. That was one sin of which he was never guilty even in the depths of madness.

Mr Brittain, then, is right. "*A Song to David* is no miracle of insanity, but a perfectly logical development of Smart's natural bent." And yet the insanity counts for a good deal. Smart's masterpiece must have been written in hours when his mind was delicately poised between sanity and madness. He was sane enough to transform the wild stuff of *Rejoice in the Lamb* into a work of art, he was mad enough to forget his eighteenth-century affectations and inhibitions and sing a strange free song that would never have won a Seatonian prize.

The flame soared, flickered, dwindled to ashes. His translation of the Psalms (1765) is closely related to the *Song* and shows a few gleams of the same quality, but the librettos for the oratorios, *Hannah* (1764) and *Abimelech* (1768), are very feeble. Still less can be said for *The Parables of Christ, Done into Familiar Verse, with Occasional Applications for the Use of Younger Minds* (1768). Dedicated to the three-year-old son of Bonnel Thornton, they are more childish than childlike. Nothing remained but the King's Bench prison and death.

Smart is not easy to pigeonhole. One can say that his inherited Puritanism is preserved and enhanced by the general trend toward religious emotionalism which fostered the Evangelical Movement. Hence although a passionate lover of nature, he transforms the universe of Newton into the universe of David. When he is most truly himself, he is a mystic of the nature-symbolist type. The mysticism of inward power, on the other hand, is alien to his deep humility. Herein he differs sharply from Byrom. If the subjective mysticism of Byrom and the objective mysticism of Smart

were detached from traditional Christianity and combined, the result would be a mind like that of Blake, who had Byrom's faith in creative imagination and Smart's ability to see angels in apple trees. Smart's love of nature might have become a vehicle for the religion of sentiment, but he steadily subjected it to the praise of David's God.¹⁰⁸ These obvious remarks, however, do not reach the depths of a man who, for better and for worse, lived in a world which we cannot enter

It is believed that *Rejoice in the Lamb* was studied by Hayley during his endeavors to relieve the madness of William Cowper (1731-1800).¹⁰⁹ This poet has received so much attention in both his preromantic and Evangelical aspects that his relation to our subject is as obvious as Young's.¹¹⁰ It may, however, be profitable to reconsider him in the light of what has been learned from less familiar poets

Cowper's early environment was conservatively Anglican but by no means ardently devout. No breath of enthusiasm ruffled the calm, cool, professionalized faith of his father, the Reverend John Cowper. His mother had a warmer heart, but we know nothing definite about her religion. In any case she died when the boy was only six. The trivial verses that Cowper wrote before his first attack of madness in 1763, though less frivolous than might be expected of a member of the Nonsense Club and a former school-fellow of Churchill and Lloyd, are not remarkable for their piety. The paraphrase of Psalm CXXXVII is a perfunctory exercise. Somewhat more interestingly, *An Ode on Reading Mr Richardson's History of Sir Charles Grandison* reminds the "apostate and profane" that the hero's virtues are "Deriv'd from Heaven alone." The gloomy little poem beginning "Mortals! around your destin'd heads" ends with a prayer that he may live in readiness for disaster and introduces for the first time those images of shipwreck and drowning which run through Cowper's work to culminate in *The Castaway*. One suspects, however, that the poem is an attempt to imitate Prior in his seriously fatalistic vein.

A glimpse of what is more probably the real religion of Cowper at this

¹⁰⁸ *On Good-Nature* contains the usual formulas of benevolism, but here and elsewhere in his potboilers the few sentimental touches are not organically related to his religion.

¹⁰⁹ *Rejoice in the Lamb*, p. 15.

¹¹⁰ Although Cowper's masterpiece falls beyond the chronological limits of this study, he produced so many important poems before 1780 that his inclusion as the laureate of Evangelicalism seems justified.

time may be obtained from the lines *Addressed to Miss Macartney, on Reading the Prayer for Indifference* (written 1762)¹²¹ It would be hard to find a more typical statement of benevolism than is given in these stanzas

What though, in scaly armour drest,
Indifference may repel
 The shafts of woe—in such a breast
 No joy can ever dwell

'Tis woven in the world's great plan,
 And fix'd by heav'n's decree,
 That all the true delights of man
 Should spring from *Sympathy*

'Tis nature bids, and whilst the laws
 Of nature we retain,
 Our self-approving bosom draws
 A pleasure from its pain

Thus grief itself has comforts dear,
 The sordid never know,
 And ecstasy attends the tear,
 When virtue bids it flow

For, when it streams from that pure source,
 No bribes the heart can win,
 To check, or alter from its course,
 The luxury within

So far, then, a standard case of Whiggish latitudinarianism melting down into sentimentalism¹²² But in the following year a new factor was to alter the whole course of Cowper's development In considering this change it is important to remember that his first attack of madness and the feebly hysterical attempt at suicide had nothing to do with religion At this time he was not, in any important sense, a religious person at all The approaching examination for the Clerkship of Journals of the House of Lords merely raised above the threshold of consciousness an accumulation of fears which had been festering in his mind ever since, as a child of seven, he had been horribly bullied at Dr Pitman's school¹²³ The tormentor, find-

¹²¹ Intended as a refutation of a Stoical poem by Mrs Greville which may be found in the *Annual Register*, V, 202

¹²² In a man such as Horace Walpole, of course, the trend would have moved from latitudinarianism to scepticism, but Cowper was of those who need a faith

¹²³ In 1752, during a period of lonely and uncongenial residence in the Middle Temple, he had suffered a slighter attack of melancholia which was banished by a visit to Southampton

ing that his victim possessed a secret physical abnormality, had made the most of his discovery.¹¹⁴ Now, when the violence of Cowper's mania had lapsed into the depressive phase, he was visited by his cousin, the Reverend Martin Madan,¹¹⁵ a prominent Evangelical, and by Madan's no less pious assistant at Lock Chapel, the Reverend Thomas Haweis. They did not wholly convert Cowper, but they convinced him of his need of spiritual rebirth. They also persuaded his brother John to commit him to the care of good Dr Nathaniel Cotton at St Alban's.¹¹⁶

In 1763, shortly before or shortly after entering Cotton's asylum, Cowper produced the *Lines Written During a Period of Insanity*

Man disavows, and Deity disowns me
Hell might afford my miseries a shelter,
Therefore hell keeps her ever hungry mouths all
Bolted against me

His fate is "worse than Abiram's," for

Him the vindictive rod of angry justice
Sent quick and howling to the centre headlong,
I, fed with judgment, in a fleshly tomb am
Buried above ground

¹¹⁴ Mr Thomas Wright gives no evidence for his suggestion that Cowper was a partial hermaphrodite (*Life of Cowper*, 1921 edition, p 6 and n). The passage on Cowper which he cites from Reeve's edition of the *Greville Memoirs* refers merely to 'some defect in his physical conformation'. But Wright is substantiated by the first complete and ungarbled edition of the *Memoirs* which appeared in 1938. There Greville's entry for September 18, 1834 reads: 'Taylor brought me a parcel of letters to Frank to Southey the other day, they are from Newton, Cowper's nephew (I think to Mr Thornton), and they are to supply Southey with materials for Cowper's Life, which he is writing. There is one curious fact revealed in these letters, which accounts for much of Cowper's morbid state of mind and fits of depression, as well as for the circumstance of his running away from his place in the House of Lords. He was an Hermaphrodite, somebody knew his secret, and probably threatened its exposure (III, 85). Southey of course never published this information, but there is reason to believe that he did not keep the secret inviolate. James Spedding writes to William Bodham Donne that he has seen Southey at Keswick "and he gave me some very strange and interesting information about Cowper which he gathered out of certain letters from Newton to Thornton. The strangest of all will not be made public"' (Quoted by Frances M. Brookfield, *The Cambridge "Apostles,"* p 263). It seems obvious that Greville and Spedding are referring to the same fact. Spedding's letter also resolves any doubts that might be raised by Greville's error as to 'Cowper's nephew' and his uncertainty as to Thornton. There is no reason to believe that Cowper's sexual impulses, granting a pretty strong mother-fixation, were abnormal. The likeliest supposition is that his sex organs were malformed in such a way as to give the appearance of hermaphroditism. Cases of this kind are said to be familiar to physicians.

¹¹⁵ Madan later disgraced himself by publishing *Thelyphthora* (1780), an argument for the revival of Old Testament polygamy as a remedy for prostitution, and Cowper attacked him in *Anti-Thelyphthora* (1781). In 1763, however, Madan was a shining light among the Evangelicals.

¹¹⁶ See p 97

The "luxury within" of benevolism has given place to a mood which can be expressed only in the grim Sapphics of Watts's *Day of Judgment*¹¹⁷ In the "Collegium Insanorum," however, his sanity was temporarily restored and his conversion was achieved Within a year after writing these despairing lines he heard the Saviour's voice

I, He said, have seen thee grieving,
Lov'd thee as I pass'd thee by,
Be not faithless, but believing,
Look, and live, and never die

Take the Bloody Seal I give thee,
Deep impress'd upon thy soul,
God, thy God, will now receive thee,
Faith hath sav'd thee, thou art whole

Since that hour, in hope of glory,
With thy foll'wers I am found,
And relate the wond'rous story
To thy list'ning saints around¹¹⁸

The two poems display, respectively, the midnight and the sunrise of Calvinism Henceforth, when Cowper was his naturally sanguine self, he was a sane Evangelical, when he was mad, he was an insane Evangelical

Cowper wrote little or nothing after leaving St Alban's until, domesticated at Olney with Mrs Unwin, he began to work on the *Olney Hymns*¹¹⁹ In most of these the urge to instruct and convince is much stronger than the urge to sing, but a few of them—"God moves in a mysterious way," "Oh! for a closer walk with God," "Sometimes a light surprises"—belong to religious poetry as well as to hymnography

The theology of Cowper's *Hymns* is that of Cowper's ecclesiastical party There is a persistent stress on the atoning sacrifice By bathing in the

fountain fill'd with blood,
Drawn from Emmanuel's veins,

¹¹⁷ Compare "howling to the centre headlong" with Watts's
Hideous and gloomy, to receive 'em headlong
Down to the centre

¹¹⁸ *A Song of Mercy and Judgment* (written 1764)

¹¹⁹ The volume, in which of course he collaborated with Newton, appeared in 1779, but almost all of Cowper's 67 contributions (Newton wrote 281) were written in 1771 and 1772

the sinner acquires the right to exclaim

Lord, I believe thou hast prepar'd
 (Unworthy tho' I be)
 For me a blood-bought free reward,
 A golden harp for me!

The reward is "free" in the sense that, since it has been predestined for the elect and only for them, it cannot be bought by good works

Grace, triumphant in the throne,
 Scorns a rival, reigns alone,
 Come and bow beneath her sway,
 Cast your idol works away
 Works of man, when made his plea,
 Never shall accepted be,
 Fruits of pride (vain-glorious worm)
 Are the best he can perform

But the total purport of the *Hymns* is by no means gloomy or threatening. The title *Light Shining Out Of Darkness* might serve for the whole volume. It is assumed that heartfelt faith is evidence of election, and sin is emphasized merely to show that the Blood of the Lamb can wash away the deepest stain.

Although many of Cowper's poems are written in the first person, they are seldom very specifically subjective. At times a heaviness of spirit makes him wonder if he possesses that deep contrition which is the prerequisite of the new birth.

Oh make this heart rejoice, or ache,
 Decide this doubt for me,
 And if it be not broken, break,
 And heal it, if it be

But so long as he can reproach himself for this lack of vital feeling there is still a chance of amendment.

Cold as I feel this heart of mine,
 Yet since I *feel* it so—
 It yields some hope of life divine
 Within, however low

Hence these moods soon give place to confident trust in the Crucified

When darkness long has veiled my mind,
 And smiling day once more appears,
 Then, my Redeemer, then I find
 The folly of my doubts and fears

Cowper's collaborator, the Reverend John Newton, has often been blamed for the relapse into madness which began in January, 1773, and lasted for over a year. An equally probable hypothesis has not, I believe, hitherto been suggested. To forestall gossip, Cowper became engaged to Mrs Unwin in the preceding year, but their marriage—if indeed true marriage was a physical possibility—would have entailed discovery of his burdensome secret. If in 1763 the prospect of a routine examination had led him to attempt suicide there was now a much stronger motive for hysterical evasion of the issue. No doubt a contributing cause was Newton's noisy and relentless energy, which at first overexcited Cowper and later exhausted him. But Newton did not scare Cowper into madness with threats of hell-fire. Even more than most Evangelicals of his day, the former slave trader preached a Calvinism not of "sinners in the hands of an angry God" but of "grace abounding to the chief of sinners." He is not to be held accountable for the fact that the madness of the converted Cowper assumed a perverted religious form, nor is there the slightest reason to suppose that the poet would have been free from morbid fears if his mentor's theology had been Arminian. Even more absurd, of course, is the notion that a complete absence of Christian belief would have enabled Cowper to retain his sanity.

Though Cowper recovered in the spring of 1774, thenceforward one corner of his mind was never quite free from the fear that God had singled him out as an object of special detestation. Largely as a therapeutic measure Mrs Unwin urged him to write, and by 1780 he was at work on the series of long half-satirical, half-pietistic poems which he published in 1782.¹²⁰ Their general model is *Love of Fame*, but Cowper is usually too solemn and urgent to capture Young's tone of edifying banter.

The volume opens with *Table Talk*, where Whiggery and Puritanism are closely interwoven. The main theme is praise of true patriotism and liberty. He who fights "with justice on his side" is a hero, but he who fights for personal ambition, like too many kings, is a villain. Kings were made for men, not men for kings. Rulers are to be pitied, for they are hemmed in by flatterers, but they have many opportunities to do good, especially

To give religion her unbridled scope,
Nor judge by statute a believer's hope

Religion and liberty are intimately related, for liberty banishes superstition. Here something of his old latitudinarianism is adapted to the interests of an

¹²⁰ *Poems by William Cowper, of the Inner Temple, Esq*

vanity of learning has loaded the simplicity of the Scriptures with fantastic and arrogant speculations The same spirit is displayed by

Philosophers, who darken and put out
Eternal truth by everlasting doubt,

but Newton, Boyle, and Locke were thinkers of a different sort—"Affable, humble, diffident, and mild" His loyalty to these pillars of his father's religion is worth noting Finally, the slightest concession to sin is perilous But the sinner can repent and cling to the Cross, which "once seen, is death to every vice"

There, and there only (though the deist rave,
And atheist, if earth bears so base a slave),
There, and there only, is the pow'r to save

Expostulation is in the same scolding, threatening vein National corruption begins with a corrupt clergy

When nations are to perish for their sins,
'Tis in the church the leprosy begins

England's rebelliousness toward God is like that of Israel If the Jews, so blessed with divine guidance, have sunk to their present level, what may not happen to us? Proud of her own accomplishments, England has forgotten that man is a mere instrument of Providence She has strayed so far from God that she has

by statute shov'd from its design
The Saviour's feast, his own blest bread and wine,
And made the symbols of atoning grace
An office-key, a pick-lock to a place,
That infidels may prove their title good
By an oath dipp'd in sacramental blood ¹²⁸

The rich have wholly succumbed to the allurements of sense, and even among the poor and lowly one finds no true religious humility

Denied that earthly opulence they choose,
God's better gift they scoff at and refuse

Cowper is somewhat easier and more urbane in *Conversation* At first, indeed, one seems to be reading an essay in the Horatian "art of" tradition, but the desire to prove that the best talk is religious talk emerges all

¹²⁸ See "Occasional Conformity" in the Index of Topics of Vol. I References to this practise become extremely rare in the poetry of the 1740-1780 period

too soon Conversation has been debased by contentiousness, pride, and wicked oaths Though man should consecrate his lips to God's praise, the world of fashion regards all talk of spiritual matters as impolite But once we know our need of God's mercy, the right sort of conversation streams naturally from the heart The joys of religious conversation are often sneered at as "fanatic and absurd," but the unbeliever holds no monopoly of wit

Religion curbs indeed its wanton play,
And brings the trifier under rig'rous sway,
But gives it usefulness unknown before,
And, purifying, makes it shine the more
A Christian's wit is inoffensive light,
A beam that aids, but never grieves the sight

The poet remembers

A vet'ran warrior in the Christian field,
Who never saw the sword he could not wield,
Grave without dullness, learned without pride,
Exact, yet not precise, though meek, keen-ey'd,

Who, when occasion justified its use,
Had wit as bright as ready to produce,
Could fetch from records of an earlier age,
Or from philosophy's enlighten'd page,
His rich materials, and regale your ear
With strains it was a privilege to hear
Yet, above all, his luxury supreme,
And his chief glory, was the gospel theme

Even when Cowper most completely spurns the world, he still remembers that he is "of the Inner Temple, Esq "

It is hard, he continues, for those who believe in nothing beyond the reach of their senses to realize that there are people who have been born again and who sincerely love to talk about it It is not the reborn, but their critics, who may justly be charged with insincerity

Retort the charge, and let the world be told
She boasts a confidence she does not hold,
That, conscious of her crimes, she feels instead
A cold misgiving, and a killing dread,

That while she dotes, and dreams that she believes,
She mocks her Maker, and herself deceives,

Her utmost reach, historical assent,
 The doctrines warp't to what they never meant,
 That truth itself is in her head as dull,
 And useless, as a candle in a skull,
 And all her love of God a groundless claim,
 A trick upon the canvas, painted flame
 Tell her again, the sneer upon her face,
 And all her censures of the work of grace,
 Are insincere, meant only to conceal
 A dread she would not, yet is forc'd to feel,
 That in her heart the Christian she reveres,
 And while she seems to scorn him, only fears

This attack is directed not at the unbeliever but at the cold nominal Christian who, vainly relying on baptismal regeneration, denies the all-importance of the Evangelical new birth

Retirement is interesting to us because Cowper here distinguishes religious retirement from the *Il Penseroso* sentimentalism which, were it not for his conversion, he would probably have cultivated, but since the same distinction is drawn more powerfully in *The Task*, this section of the 1782 volume requires no analysis

In *Charity*, Cowper turns to another aspect of the cult of sentiment, criticizing benevolism from the Evangelical point of view. The only *real* charity is *religious* charity. All other social ties may produce as much evil as good. Commerce is often a socializing influence, but it is accompanied by the evils of slavery. Liberty brings men together in mutual service, but even in England, her favorite abode, there are debtors' prisons. Natural philosophy also makes for social unity. Reason without religion, however, gets nothing right. Only revelation can convince the proud scientist of his sinfulness. Without this *true* philosophy, science is pretentious trifling. In short, saving faith is the only reliable source of charity.

No works can find acceptance, in that day
 When all disguises shall be rent away,
 That square not truly with the scripture plan,
 Nor spring from love to God, or love to man

Hope might roughly be described as *The Vanity of Human Wishes* rewritten by a disciple of John Newton. All hopes are illusory and harmful

If wild in nature, and not duly found,
 Gethsemane, in thy dear hallow'd ground

A strong passage defends the memory of Leuconomus (Whitefield) against his detractors

He lov'd the world that hated him the tear
That dropp'd upon his Bible was sincere
Assail'd by scandal, and the tongue of strife,
His only answer was, a blameless life

Blush, calumny! and write upon his tomb,
If honest eulogy can spare thee room,
Thy deep repentance of thy thousand lies,
Which, aim'd at him, have pierc'd th' offended skies,
And say, Blot out my sin, confess'd, deplor'd,
Against thine image in thy saint, oh Lord!

The shameful treatment meted out to Whitefield shows how, posing all the while as defenders of religion, those who wish to keep their follies attack the faith which alone could transform their lives. Happy is the bard whose lines "Seek to delight, that they may mend mankind," but "happier far" are the great preachers, who bring to man plain truth undisguised by art

Their language simple, as their manners meek,
No shining ornaments have they to seek,
Nor labour they, nor time, nor talents, waste,
In sorting flow'rs to suit a fickle taste,
But, while they speak the wisdom of the skies,
Which art can only darken and disguise,
Th' abundant harvest, recompense divine,
Repay's their work—the gleanings only mine

Still gleaning in the footsteps of Whitefield and Newton, Cowper gives a somewhat rambling disquisition on *Truth*. Not very surprisingly, he asserts that the only truth which gives genuine happiness is the truth of free-grace Christianity. The chief obstacle to the acceptance of this view is man's pride in his own supposed virtues and powers. This includes the pride of sanctimoniousness. A Christian hermit, a "bramin," and a censorious old maid are described as proud of their ability to make themselves miserable. They have wrong notions of religion, for "True piety is cheerful as the day." What God wants is free and joyous obedience, not gloomy slavery—was not human liberty Christ's great aim? There is nothing enthusiastic or hypocritical about the joy of the true saint

A soul redeem'd demands a life of praise,
Hence the complexion of his future days,
Hence a demeanour holy and unspeck'd,
And the world's hatred, as its sure effect

The saint incurs the world's hatred because his happiness depends upon recognition of the fact that he is a helpless sinner, utterly dependent on God's uncovenanted mercy "He has no hope who never had a fear" Most people scorn such humility Some are sure that their virtues will buy their way into heaven They live morally and suppose that if they commit some venial sin it can always be atoned for by charity to the poor A good many English sinners are thoroughly popish in their reliance on good works

Learning and wit are spiritual snares because they nourish pride The point is illustrated by what is probably the most famous passage in the volume—the contrast between Voltaire and the poor Olney lacemaker who

Just knows, and knows no more, her Bible true—
A truth the brilliant Frenchman never knew,
And in that charter reads, with sparkling eyes,
Her title to a treasure in the skies
Oh, happy peasant! Oh, unhappy bard!
His the mere tinsel, her's the rich reward,
He prais'd, perhaps, for ages yet to come,
She never heard of half a mile from home,
He, lost in errors, his vain heart prefers,
She, safe in the simplicity of her's

Wealth and high social rank are similarly dangerous Of course the great ones of the earth *can* be saved, but they are heavily handicapped Yet there are exceptions like Lord Dartmouth—"one who wears a coronet, and prays"

Is there then no virtue without Christianity? The good pagans of ancient days were unwittingly aided by God's grace, but those who have the full light of the Gospel and refuse to follow it had best beware On Judgment Day there will be a great difference between the despair of the proud unbeliever and the joy of the humble believer who can address his God

Since the dear hour that brought me to thy foot,
And cut up all my follies by the root,
I never trusted in an arm but thine,
Nor hop'd, but in thy righteousness divine
My pray'rs and alms, imperfect, and defil'd,
Were but the feeble efforts of a child,

Cleans'd in thine own all purifying blood,
Forgive their evil, and accept their good
I cast them at thy feet—my only plea
Is what it was—dependence upon thee

The 1782 volume is too directly polemic and hortatory to be aesthetically satisfying, though there are moments when Cowper's excitement becomes poetic as well as pious. Granting his premises, his arguments are at times very cogent. One finds some well-pointed shafts of satire and some eloquently emotional rhetoric. We have done the book no great injustice, however, in regarding it as a versified compendium of Evangelicalism. Cowper, we see, is especially persistent in attacking various manifestations of that human self-esteem which is the basis of the religion of sentiment. With his fellow-Evangelicals, he has revived the original Calvinistic sense of helplessness and corruption. Swimming back toward the sources of the river of Puritanism, he meets, and heartily disapproves of, the sentimentalists who are drifting downstream. They have forgotten that in order to be a god it is first necessary to be a worm.

When Cowper was too weary or too disturbed to compose original verse, he found peace in translation. Early in 1782 the Reverend William Bull, Independent minister of the nearby town of Newport Pagnel, gave him the poems of Madame Guion with the suggestion that he render some of them in English. By the end of the year or thereabouts, Cowper had translated thirty-seven of her spiritual songs.¹²⁴ The fact does not justify any attempt to connect Cowper with the same "mystical" tradition that influenced Byrom. Cowper was one of the least mystical Christians who ever lived. As for Madame Guion's particular brand of enthusiasm, the complete spiritual limpness of Quietism may have been momentarily tempting to a man whose religious experience was excessively tense, but his Evangelical principles would permit no serious dalliance with the snare. Madame Guion was deeply and ecstatically pious, she was an interesting exception to the rule that the French are frivolous and sceptical, her poems were not without merit and possessed peculiarities of form and style which challenged a technician who liked to grapple with problems of translation. As two scholars have recently shown,¹²⁵ Cowper translates adroitly and on the whole faithfully, but he tones down her languishing eroticism, filters out a good deal of her baby-talk familiarity with the Godhead, and sometimes substitutes the self-abasement of Evangelicalism for the self-effacement of Quietism.

In the preceding year a much more important event had taken place

¹²⁴ Published by Bull in 1801 as *Poems Translated from the French of Madame de la Mothe Guion*.

¹²⁵ Dorothy Lloyd Gilbert and Russell Pope, "The Cowper Translation of Mme Guion's Poems," *PMLA*, LIV, 1077-98. See also Lodwick Hartley, "Cowper and Mme Guyon. Additional Notes," *PMLA*, LVI, 585-87.

Lady Austen had come to Olney She was vivacious, intelligent, and pretty—even beautiful, if Romney has not flattered her Though not of the high aristocracy, she was a person of quality without the vices which Cowper was quick to observe in women of her rank Not extremely devout, she was religious enough to obviate any antagonism on that score And so Lady Austen restored to Cowper parts of his own nature which his conversion had prevented from developing—his heritage as an eighteenth-century gentleman with a true poetic gift She brought back wit, urbanity, a harmless affection for the pleasant surfaces of life, and tender sensibility She encouraged his submerged impulse to look upon the world as a poet, not merely as a versifying preacher Hence *The Task*, while not a great poem, is one of the minor classics of English literature Its mild beauty has a charm of which the 1782 volume gives no inkling

Not that Cowper undergoes any radical transformation He is now a poet, and his art has sweetened his religion But he remains a strict Evangelical with a horrible fear lurking in the shadows of his mind Large portions of *The Task*, especially Book II, continue to nag and threaten the thoughtless quite in the manner of the earlier volume He still tries to persuade people who are enjoying themselves that they are deeply miserable He sees many signs that God's patience will not last much longer a hurricane and a volcanic eruption in Jamaica, a large crop of meteors, an unusually heavy and widespread fog¹²⁶

The clergy, who should be urging sinners to repent while there is time, are themselves idle and frivolous They buy their sermons and preach not to convert the world but to win its approval Even worse, in order to parade their learning they use pagan philosophy rather than the Scriptures

Is Christ the abler teacher, or the schools?
 If Christ, then why resort at ev'ry turn
 To Athens or to Rome, for wisdom short
 Of man's occasions, when in him reside
 Grace, knowledge, comfort—an unfathom'd store?
 How oft, when Paul has serv'd us with a text,
 Has Epictetus, Plato, Tully preach'd!¹²⁷

The paganism of the clergy has had a bad effect on the laity The boundaries between virtue and vice have been obscured, the blackest sins are viewed with tolerance, the sources of domestic happiness have been poisoned¹²⁸ The lower classes are not much better than the aristocracy Their poverty is

¹²⁶ Book II¹²⁷ *Ibid*¹²⁸ Book III

largely their own fault, for they have willingly succumbed to the "public pest" of drunkenness ¹²⁹

Like the fundamentalists of the present day, Cowper is very severe against "science falsely so called"

Some drill and bore
The solid earth, and from the strata there
Extract a register, by which we learn
That he who made it, and revealed its date
To Moses, was mistaken in its age
Some, more acute, and more industrious still,
Contrive creation, travel nature up
To the sharp peak of her sublimest height,
And tell us whence the stars, why some are fix'd,
And planetary some, what gave them first
Rotation, from what fountain flow'd their light
Great contest follows, and much learned dust
Involves the combatants, each claiming truth,
And truth disclaiming both ¹³⁰

The voice of William Jennings Bryan gives place to that of Wordsworth in lines contrasting the wisdom fostered by rural meditation with the knowledge gleaned from books

Knowledge and wisdom, far from being one,
Have oft-times no connexion Knowledge dwells
In heads replete with thoughts of other men,
Wisdom in minds attentive to their own
Knowledge, a rude unprofitable mass,
The mere materials with which wisdom builds,
Till smooth'd and squar'd and fitted to its place,
Does but encumber whom it seems t'enrich
Knowledge is proud that he has learn'd so much,
Wisdom is humble that he knows no more ¹³¹

Cowper protests against England's vices not only as a pious Christian but as a highly sensitive humanitarian, a lover of liberty, and a patriot "England, with all thy faults I love thee still" He remains a liberal Whig of the old school Everyone knows his "Slaves cannot breathe in England" and his prophetic hopes for the fall of the Bastille But he fears that "the age of virtuous politics is past" Poor old England is rotten and doomed She has forgotten—and here Cowper parts company with the sentimentalist champion

¹²⁹ Book IV

¹³⁰ Book III

¹³¹ Book VI

of freedom—that the only genuine liberty is brought with the blood of Christ

He is a freeman whom the truth makes free,
And all are slaves beside ¹³⁰

He who lives in the slavery of unbelief turns to false prophets who will tell him how to “sin without disturbance”

Haste now, philosopher, and set him free,
Charm the deaf serpent wisely Make him hear
Of rectitude and fitness, moral truth
How lovely, and the moral sense how sure,
Consulted and obey’d, to guide his steps
Directly to the FIRST AND ONLY FAIR
Spare not in such a cause Spend all the pow’rs
Of rant and rhapsody in virtue’s praise
Be most sublimely good, verbosely grand —

Ah, tinkling cymbal, and high sounding brass,
Smitten in vain! such music cannot charm
Th’ eclipse that intercepts truth’s heav’nly beam,
And chills and darkens a wide-wand’ring soul
The STILL SMALL VOICE IS WANTED ¹³³

Here, with some help from Pope, he is attacking the Shaftesbury-Hutcheson school

Cowper’s reputation as a precursor of romanticism is based upon his strong though gentle feeling, his ability to be imaginative as well as rhetorical, his tenderness toward worms, hares, and slaves, his political liberalism, but most of all his keen and loving eye for external nature Before a particularly fine descriptive passage he addresses Mary Unwin

Thou know’st my praise of nature most sincere,
And that my raptures are not conjur’d up
To serve occasions of poetic pomp,
But genuine ¹³⁴

The fashionable theme of rural retirement, to which Cowper had devoted one of the 1782 *Poems*, had a more personal meaning for him than for most of his contemporaries Taken in isolation, some passages in *The Task* remind us of a tradition which had become a principal feature of sentimentalism He believes that

The love of Nature, and the scene she draws,
Is Nature’s dictate

¹³³ Book V

¹³³ *Ibid*

¹³⁴ Book I

The works of nature are lovelier than the works of art The country is a place of physical and mental health "The spleen is seldom felt where Flora reigns" That disease is caused by the satiety of the worldling, who cannot distinguish between true and false gaiety Innocent, simple creatures like larks and peasants are gay, but Cowper begs to be spared

From gaiety that fills the bones with pain,
The mouth with blasphemy, the heart with woe ¹⁸⁵

Yet although Cowper prizes the opportunities which retirement provides for quiet meditation, he knows too well the darker side of solitude to champion lonely contemplativeness His utmost exertion was an afternoon of puttering in his garden or a walk to the Throckmortons in Weston Underwood, but he holds that "By ceaseless action all that is subsists," that nature "lives but while she moves," and that only "th' alert and active" are happy Hence he disapproves of "A vagabond and useless tribe" of gipsies, who prefer "squalid sloth to honourable toil" He praises the labors of the thresher

'Tis the primal curse,
But soften'd into mercy, made the pledge
Of cheerful days, and nights without a groan ¹⁸⁶

The hardy rustic is

Happy, and, in my account, denied
That sensibility of pain with which
Refinement is endued, thrice happy thou! ¹⁸⁷

For Cowper, however, activity does not imply immersion in the folly and wickedness of the world Reading the newspaper in his snug parlor at Olney, he feels a Lucretian detachment from Vanity Fair

'Tis pleasant through the loop-holes of retreat
To peep at such a world, to see the stir
Of the great Babel, and not feel the crowd,
To hear the roar she sends through all her gates
At a safe distance, where the dying sound
Falls a soft murmur on th' uninjur'd ear
I behold
The tumult, and am still ¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid*

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid*

¹⁸⁷ Book IV

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid*

But there are moods when even this withdrawal is insufficient to stifle his horror at the news the postboy brings

Oh for a lodge in some vast wilderness,
Some boundless contiguity of shade,
Where rumour of oppression and deceit,
Of unsuccessful or successful war,
Might never reach me more My ear is pain'd,
My soul is sick, with ev'ry day's report
Of wrong and outrage with which earth is fill'd ¹³⁹

Cowper, however, would be thoroughly uncomfortable in the wilderness. Though he remembers that "God made the country, and man made the town," he is by no means a thoroughgoing primitivist. He is suspicious of large cities, but believes that civilized life is "friendly to virtue" ¹⁴⁰. Actual rural life and "Nature" are, alas, by no means the same thing. "The town has tinged the country." The village has become commercialized, and the old relations between tenant and squire have broken down. Heirs care nothing for the country except to exploit it. "Estates are landscapes now." Ruined by such extravagance, the clients of Capability Brown are engulfed in the vices of London. In short, Arcadia is no more—"We are polished now!" but for all that, Cowper loves the country. No man, he says, is without an unquenchable thirst for it.

Hail, therefore, patroness of health, and ease,
And contemplation, heart-consoling joys
And harmless pleasures, in the throng'd abode
Of multitudes unknown! hail, rural life! ¹⁴¹

Genuinely as Cowper loves nature, his ideas on the subject are wavering and inconsistent. They are also much less "romantic" than those of Thomson, who, though chronologically earlier, represents a more advanced stage in the deliquescence of Protestantism than does this poet of the Evangelical Revival ¹⁴². Cowper would not deny that the creation provides evidence of the wisdom and goodness of the Creator, but he detests a sentimentally deistic reliance on merely natural revelation. He holds, on the contrary, that in order to view nature religiously we must *first* know the God of the Scriptures.

Acquaint thyself with God, if thou wouldst taste
His works

¹³⁹ Book II

¹⁴¹ Books III and IV

¹⁴⁰ Argument of Book I

¹⁴² For Thomson see I, 509-34

When the glorious liberty of the children of God "breaks on the soul" in the new birth, the joy of that experience illumines all nature

In that blest moment Nature, throwing wide
Her veil opaque, discloses with a smile
The author of her beauties, who, retir'd
Behind his own creation, works unseen
By the impure, and hears his power denied ¹⁴³

Cowper's most revealing utterance on the relations between God and nature begins with words which Thomson himself might have written but ends with Jesus

The Lord of all, himself, through all diffus'd,
Sustains, and is the life of all that lives
Nature is but a name for an effect,
Whose cause is God

Him blind antiquity profan'd, not serv'd,
With self-taught rites, and under various names,
Female and male, Pomona, Pales, Pan,
And Flora, and Vertumnus, peopling earth
With tutelary goddesses and gods
That were not, and commanding, as they would,
To each some province, garden, field, or grove
But all are under one One spirit—His
Who wore the platted thorns with bleeding brows—
Rules universal nature Not a flow'r
But shows some touch, in freckle, streak, or stain
Of his unrivall'd pencil

As with him no scene
Is dreary, so with him all seasons please
Though winter had been none, had man been true,
And earth be punish'd for its tenant's sake,
Yet not in vengeance, as this smiling sky,
So soon succeeding such an angry night,
And these dissolving snows, and this clear stream
Recov'ring fast its liquid music, prove ¹⁴⁴

For us, then, Cowper's most significant characteristic is his ability to subject to the purest Evangelicalism a nature-feeling much stronger and more genuine than that of most of his unorthodox sentimental contemporaries. He transforms the eighteenth-century God of Nature into the Crucified

¹⁴³ Book V

¹⁴⁴ Book VI

Christ This he can do because his love of nature and his love of Christ are so closely interwoven The stricken deer and the Hound of Heaven met in the "distant shades"

There was I found by one who had himself
 Been hurt by th' archers In his side he bore,
 And in his hands and feet, the cruel scars
 With gentle force soliciting the darts,
 He drew them forth, and heal'd, and bade me live
 Since then, with few associates, in remote
 And silent woods I wander, far from those
 My former partners of the peopled scene,
 With few associates, and not wishing more ¹⁴⁵

To carry the story of Cowper's career from the beginning of *The Task* through a few years of peaceful and happy work and then to trace its downward course until the castaway finally sinks beneath the waves would add little to our understanding of his religion Several other poems are germane to the subject, but in examining them we should merely be repeating points which have already been covered in this brief discussion of Cowper as the one important poet of the Evangelical Movement

Thanks to his association with Evangelicalism, Cowper is the most primitively Protestant Christian of the four poets discussed in this chapter The three others are certainly to be classified as Christians, but being less influenced by the theology of the Revival they display more plainly the trend of eighteenth-century Protestantism toward the cult of sentiment In the remaining chapters we shall study poets who successively illustrate still more advanced stages of this process until we arrive at exemplars of a relatively pure religious sentimentalism

¹⁴⁵ Book III

Chapter VII

SENTIMENTAL CHRISTIANS

IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY AS A WHOLE, THE MAIN STREAM OF POETIC response to religious thought and feeling descends from seventeenth-century Protestantism through latitudinarianism to a definitely non-Christian sentimentalism. We must, however, make allowances for a countercurrent which marks the period to which this volume is devoted. The widespread impression that deism has been discredited by its Christian opponents encourages the expression of sentimental ideas in Christian rather than in deistic terms. Many a Man of Feeling is shocked by the vices of the age into a greater respect for the traditional faith than he would otherwise have entertained. Though rejecting the rigidity and harshness of Evangelicalism he may accept something of its warmth. The progressive decay of rationalism, the spread of a scepticism which can as readily be soft as hard, makes it even easier than before for the sentimentalist to call himself a Christian with no sense of being intellectually disreputable. Christianity increasingly becomes one more thing to be sentimental about.

Between 1740 and 1780, therefore, we find, more abundantly than in the period of the first volume, poetry which represents in varying proportions a blend of Christianity and sentimentalism—Christianity sentimentalized, or the cult of feeling with a Christian tinge. The poets of this chapter are roughly classifiable as eighteenth-century Christians, but they display tendencies which necessitate the qualifying adjective, "sentimental." Let us begin with writers who flourish chiefly between 1740 and 1760.

The anonymous author of *Miscellany Poems, on Moral Subjects* (Chester, 1750) deals mainly in sober platitudes of the sort favored by the "unenthusiastic Christians" of Chapter III, but his *Reflections on an Evening Walk* and *A Choice for Life*¹ combine religious feeling with some affection for

¹ One of the innumerable imitations of Pomfret. See "Pomfret, John" in the Index of Names of Vol. I.

external nature Symptomatic also are his thoughts *On Affliction*, where he aspires

Successfully to paint
The Beauty of those Drops, those soft'ning Showers,
Which from Affliction's sable Clouds distill,
To form the Soul, and humanize the Heart

A Prospect of Futurity does not mention hell but dwells unctuously upon

The perfect Harmony that reigns above,
Where the great Rule of Life is social Love

In these verses, then, a conventional Christianity is colored by thoughts of scenery and tears and universal benevolence The author describes the volume as "the first Essay of a young Pen, and of a Mind, which has had little but the disagreeable Experience of an unfortunate Constitution "

From this unknown sufferer we turn to a quartet of ladies If we can trust the *Memoirs* (1762) of that "injur'd and oppress'd female," Mrs Catherine Jemmat,² she was badly treated by her "bashaw" of a father (Admiral Yeo), her stepmother, her half-brother, her "monster" husband (now happily dead), and a miscellaneous host of slanderers But since her sufferings are avowedly narrated in rivalry with those of Pamela and Clarissa, they may be regarded with some scepticism At all events this very unpleasant woman is now on her uppers and wishes to impress benevolent persons of quality not only by these *Memoirs* but by her *Miscellanies in Prose and Verse* (1766)³ Besides its epigrams, songs, occasional trifles, and bits of flattery, the latter volume includes a few poems which deserve a passing glance⁴

According to her *Memoirs*, Catherine Yeo was so staunch an Anglican that she rejected a wealthy suitor at least partly because he was a Presbyterian The usual psalm-paraphrases and epitaphs are in her repertoire, and she renders in blank verse a passage from Racine's *Esther* Her thoughts *On the Late Earthquakes*, her *Reflections on the Uncertainty of all Sub-lunary Enjoyments*, though bunglingly expressed, are unexceptionable

² Not in *DNB* I know nothing about her beyond what is dubiously revealed in her con-cited, self-pitying, and spiteful autobiography

³ Dedicated to the Queen The long list of subscribers includes many noble names besides those of the Duke of York and the Duke of Gloucester Her Introduction hints that she needs money

⁴ Several poems are also appended to the *Memoirs*, but they require no attention

Somewhat less stereotyped are two epigrams against the bill to facilitate the naturalization of the Jews which was howled down in 1753⁵

Although she admires Richardson and sends extravagant praise *To Mr Mason, on his Elfrida*, Mrs Jemmat is not very preromantic In *A Morning Reflection* she describes God as the "Parent of peace, of harmony, and love," and laments that throughout all nature man alone "still acts subversive to the general plan" of universal benevolence She has a good deal to say about contemplation and the happiness of rustics *Retirement An Ode* is the speech of a "sage" who studies "Nature's laws" as revealed by "great Newton, Albion's pride" In his rural cell,

The thought serene the heart inspires,
With pure Religion, Peace, and Love

But the good hermit is no champion of utter solitude, for his happiness is incomplete until he is joined by charming Hebe, "whom sensibility inspires" Hence, not very coherently, arises talk about virtuous love and the joys of "the poor, the happy swain" In her own person Mrs Jemmat adds, for no discernible reason

In blessing others, we ourselves are blest,
All happiness consists in mutual love,
(Divine exertion of Almighty power)
Diffused in heav'n above⁶

The Farmer is "happiest of mortal men" not merely because he is exempt from the usual civilized curses, but because when he views "his own paternal fields" his thoughts are drawn upward to heaven

There sweet prospects rise,
Of meadows smiling in their flow'ry pride,
Green hills and dales, and cottages embower'd,
The scenes of innocence and calm delight,
There the wild melody of warbling birds,
And cool refreshing groves, and murmur'ing springs,
Invite to sacred thought, and lift the mind
From low pursuits to meditate on God!

But no other poem by Mrs Jemmat even thus faintly foretakens Wordsworth's *Michael*

⁵ *Epigram* ("The traitor Judas") and *A Call to the Jews*

⁶ See also her imitation of Pomfret, *A Description of a Manner of Life*

Unlike the writer just considered, Mary Latter (1725-1777)⁷ does not make a sentimental novel of her private woes, but she whines and bristles and begs almost as offensively as her sister poet. In the Preface of her *Miscellaneous Works* (Reading, 1759) she says that she expects to be abused by certain "Cavillers" who have plotted "to oppose and retard the Sale of the Book, and render it contemptible. And, so far as I can learn, for no other than this most impertinent, insignificant, and ridiculous Reason, namely, a malicious, mean-spirited, unmerited PERSONAL Prejudice against the Author!" That is the sort of woman she is.

Most of her verses are secular trivialities with such titles as *To Miss C— On her taking one of my Clogs instead of her own*, but she assures another correspondent that she would more often write divine poetry were she not hindered from soaring by her sorrows.⁸ Her *Ode to Vanity*, a bad imitation of Young's *Love of Fame*, reveals her as a hater of priestcraft. Among the offspring of Vanity are

Error, Bigotry,
And Superstition, with her num'rous Train
Of Relics, Shrines, Processions—Pompous Nonsense!
Dight in Religion's Garb, to keep Fools under

The most important section of the *Miscellaneous Works* is entitled "Soliloquies on Temporal Indigence."⁹ In the earlier poems of this series, she is all desperation

Where? Which Way shall I turn? or Here, or There,
Behind, Before, in Contemplation rapt,
And hard Experience—(O, my bursting Heart!)
I see, I hear, I feel, the Tears, Pray'rs, Pangs,
Of inexpressible Calamity

But later, with an eager eye on the generous reader, she subjects these ravings to the curb of religion, exhorting herself

Abhorrent of thy Sin offenceful Ways,
Ah, then in Humiliation prostrate fall,
With penitent, Conviction-blushing Shame
Pour forth to Him the supplicating Pray'r
And earnest Deprecation Penitence
Averts Almighty Vengeance, and recalls
Unbounded, infinite, eternal Love

⁷ The spinster daughter of a country attorney, she spent most of her life in Reading. In 1768 Rich produced with ill success her tragedy, *The Siege of Jerusalem by Titus Vespasian*.

⁸ *To Mr —*

⁹ A series of thirty-four short blank verse reflections aroused by her financial troubles. They are doubtless inspired by Mrs. Rowe's *Devout Soliloquies* (see I, 135). The Introduction begs charitable persons of quality to come to her aid.

Miss Latter's only interestingly sentimental poem is her separately published *Miscellaneous Poetical Essay* (1761)¹⁰ After commending herself as the poverty-stricken victim of "legal Fraud" and calumny, she describes her youthful delight in retirement and poetry

Oft, in yon fragrant Arbor, Jess'mine crown'd,
With Rose and Woodbine intermingling round
Oft there, has Eloisa softly stole,
In sighing Sadness, through my thrilling Soul

This sets her off on a Cook's tour of authors Shakespeare's passion for puns must not make us forget that "Nature breathes in his enliven'd Lines" Milton is hailed as the "superlative" genius,

divinely free,
Who broke from Rhime, and flew to Poetry,

but Butler receives no less fervent adulation for exposing

Th' enthusiastic Rant, profoundly grave,
Of presbyterian, puritanic Knave
Their false, sophistical, fanatic Zeal;
Their Thirst for Blood, and Pow'r, and Commonweal

Of Prior she asks admiringly, "Who mingles Wantonness and Wit so well?" But immediately, with no sense of incongruity, she addresses Watts

To Extasy sublime entranc'd by thee,
We learn t' anticipate Eternity

Thomson receives over two pages of compliments for his descriptive skill Edward Young she values highly as a defender of the faith

Ye Stoics! Come, here melt your frozen Hearts,
Celestial Fire his heav'n-born Muse imparts
Ye adamantine Atheists, too! Draw near,
Behold, and tremble, hearken, and revere!

This occasions a long, severe digression against freethinkers, those "Boasters of Reason, Foes to common Sense" Somewhat to our surprise, Miss Latter insists that morality needs the support of supernatural religion

For Moral Rectitude, where'er it be
Without true Faith, is Reason's Reverie
And, Wretches, learn to know, Whatever Plan
Ungods the Godhead, most unmans the Man!

¹⁰ *A Miscellaneous Poetical Essay, In Three Parts Part I Authors considered Pope, Swift, Milton, Dryden, Butler, etc Part II Content, a Vision Part III The Vision continued, Contemplation*

In Part II, Content and Contemplation, "permitted by Almighty Jove," descend to instruct the poet Content, however, is the principal speaker in this section His subject is the misery of courts and the happiness of "the Swain" who frequents "the rural, shaded, humble Cell" If man would achieve contentment,

Enthusiastic Raptures ne'er must warm
His Brain, nor vile Pretence his Pray'r deform

The prime essential is to control the passions by reason

In Part III, Contemplation takes up the lecture Here Miss Latter evidently intended to soar from the ethical plane represented by Content to a more religious level The result is a sermon on submission to "Heav'n's Decree," based partly on arguments drawn from the *Essay on Man* and partly on Christian ideas which are summarized in the couplet

To him is nothing dreadful, nothing hard,
Who takes the Rock of Ages for his Guard!

We are told that when we pray to God, sighs are quite as important as words

Such Sighs, forth-issuing from the riven Heart,
In silent Energy declare its Smart,
Like Incense sweet, from Earth sublime they rise,
And with superior Ardor pierce the Skies,
Something than Language more to Sighs is giv'n,
Moving on Earth, and eloquent in Heav'n

In the contemplative retirement of her woodland retreat, Miss Latter must preserve a delicate equilibrium between a rather soft variety of conventional Protestantism and a rather negative latitudinarianism, heaving spiritual sighs but at the same time avoiding "Enthusiastic Raptures"

Not much need be said of that vapid bungler, Elizabeth Carter Keene²¹ Among a number of colorless divine poems one notices *A Meditation on the Ease of Death*, in the stanza of Gray's *Elegy*, and an "Exercise" *On Trinity Sunday*, which declares that the doctrine of the Trinity is

Mysterious, not obscure, belief removes
Obscurity.

²¹ Not in *D.N.B.* There is nothing to indicate that she was related to the famous Elizabeth Carter The names of the subscribers to her *Miscellaneous Poems* (1762) suggest some connection with Trinity College, Cambridge

Mild preromantic hankerings are suggested by a coy ditty, *The Fairy in Love*, and by a witch's song entitled *The Hag*

Midst hail, rain, and snow,
See, see, see, we go,
'Midst hurricane, fire, and storm,
The cattle beneath us
At once cease to breathe, as
Our pestilent rites we perform

The blank verse retirement piece, *A Fragment*, is also rather graveyardish

'Tis well—'tis solitude indeed!
'Tis dreadful! 'Tis superb! this sacred spot
No mortal man frequents, beneath that wall,
Which mould'ring threatens ruin on my head,
I'll set me down and let no curious eye
Trace out my hallow'd haunt let none appear
Unless to make the scene more solemn still
From out yon tomb its sheeted tenant rise,
And wail his woes with mine

The reason for all this gloom is the death of Amanda. There must be a heaven—otherwise how account for Amanda's perfections? But if there is a heaven, why is her lover permitted to suffer so? This juggling with religious conceptions provides all we need to know about Miss Keene

In character, brains, and literary talent, the learned Elizabeth Carter (1717–1806)²⁸ far outshines the women who precede her in this chapter. Poetry of course is not her forte, but her verses are well made and literate. What do they tell us about the religion of the Bluestocking who translated Crousaz's *Examen*, Algarotti's *Newtonianismo per le dame*, and the works of Epictetus?

To her father, the Reverend Nicholas Carter, she owed more than the groundwork of her erudition. In both intellectual and spiritual matters he encouraged her to think independently, trusting to the

Blest Law of Liberty! with gentle Lead
To regulate our erring Nature giv'n,
And vindicate, from slavish human Dread,
The unreserv'd Obedience due to Heav'n²⁹

²⁸ She had abandoned any serious poetic ambitions by about 1762, when she published *Poems on Several Occasions*. The youthful volume of 1738, *Poems upon Particular Occasions*, contains only eight pieces. None of these deserves mention except *In Diem Natalem*, where, on her eighteenth birthday, she prays that her religion may be "Alike from Pride and Superstition free."

²⁹ *Poems on Several Occasions* (1762), p. 63. The reference is needed because so many of her poems, like the one in question, are entitled *To* —

Although this idea of liberty as a regulating force is rather paradoxical, one remembers that Elizabeth grew up into a sober, virtuous, broadly pious woman. In a set of prefatory verses to the 1762 volume, Lyttelton¹⁴ asserts that she will dethrone Sappho's "wanton Muse,"

and bend
At pure Religion's shrine the stubborn Knees
Of bold Impiety

She herself honors the dead Mrs. Rowe in similar terms,¹⁵ but there is little in common between the two poets. Miss Carter is much less ardent than Mrs. Rowe and much less definitely a Christian.

Practically all of Elizabeth Carter's poems are serious, but most of them are ethical rather than religious. Her studies in Stoicism have probably influenced such stanzas as these:

Vain is alike the Joy we seek,
And vain what we possess,
Unless harmonious Reason tunes
The Passions into Peace.¹⁶

This philosophy has not made her forget the divinity revealed in nature. To "stupid Atheists" who "boast th' atomic Dance" she retorts that

nobler Minds, from Guilt and Passion free,
Where Truth unclouded darts her heav'nly Ray,
Or on the Earth, or in th' ætherial Road,
Survey the Footsteps of a ruling God
Sole Lord of Nature's universal Frame,
Thro' endless Years unchangeably the same

Even during a thunderstorm, nature preaches cosmic benevolence:

Thro' Nature's ever varying Scene
By different Ways pursu'd,
The one eternal End of Heav'n
Is universal Good.¹⁷

Usually, however, it is Plato rather than Epictetus who encourages her more fervent attempts to hymn the harmony of things. With him she likes to

soar on Contemplation's Wing,
And trace Perfection to th' eternal Spring

¹⁴ For the poems of Lyttelton in relation to our subject see I, 396-98.

¹⁵ *On the Death of Mrs. Rowe*

¹⁶ *Poems on Several Occasions*, p. 67

¹⁷ *Written at Midnight in a Thunder Storm*

Observe the vital Emanations flow,
That animate each fair Degree below
Whence Order, Elegance, and Beauty move
Each finer Sense, that tunes the Mind to Love¹⁸

Such notions, as in the much earlier poems of Lady Chudleigh, are mingled with laudation of female friendship¹⁹

Plato, then, she associates with contemplation, and of course she associates contemplation with rural retirement

By Heav'n's enthusiastic Impulse taught,
What shining Visions rose on Plato's Thought!

Beneath the genial Plantane's spreading Shade,
How sweet the philosophic Music play'd!²⁰

It is in emulation of him that she seeks the "Groves that wave o'er Contemplation's Dream"²¹

How sweet the Calm of this sequester'd Shore,
Where ebbing Waters musically roll
And Solitude, and silent Eve restore
The philosophic Temper of the Soul²²

The "weeping Hamadryad" who tries to defend her favorite tree from the axe is versed in the jargon of sentimentalism

Ah! Stop thy sacrilegious Hand,
Nor violate the Shade,
Where Nature form'd a silent Haunt
For Contemplation's Aid²³

This estimable *bas bleu* would resent the statement that her "contemplation" has no necessary connection with Christianity, but it is plain that when she is not praising the reason of the Stoics she is indulging in pseudo-Platonic gush

The ladies are followed by a Cumberland parson, the Reverend Thomas Denton (1724-1777)²⁴ His *Immortality Or, The Consolation of Human*

¹⁸ *Poems on Several Occasions*, p. 14

¹⁹ For Lady Mary Chudleigh, see I, 241-46

²⁰ *Poems on Several Occasions*, p. 17

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 23

²² *Ibid.* p. 70 Observe the use of Gray's stanza

²³ To — On his Design of cutting down a Shady Walk

²⁴ He received his early education from Josiah Relph (see I, 365-66), then took his B.A. and M.A. from Queens College, Oxford, and in 1754 became rector of Ashted in Surrey. Besides the two poems here described he published a devotional work in prose, *Religious Retirement for One Day in Every Month*

Life A Monody (1754) combines the pleasures of melancholy with those of pious optimism. His stanza pattern is ababdcde^{5e6}—in other words, two Gray's *Elegy* stanzas plus a *Faerie Queene* couplet. The poem opens in sadness

When black-brow'd Night her dusky Mantle spread,
And wrapt in solemn Gloom the sable Sky,

From Haunts of Men with wand'ring Steps and slow,
I solitary steal, and sooth my pensive Woe

Denton explains that his sorrows are not merely personal. Those are "social Tears" that "fast trickle down my Cheek" at the thought that all things inevitably move toward death. And so,

Come, Melancholy, spread thy Raven Wing,
And in thy ebon Car, by Fancy led,
To the dark Charnel Vault thy Vot'ry bring,
The murky Mansions of the mould'ring Dead,
Where dank Dews breathe, and taint the sickly Skies,
Where in sad loathsome Heaps all human Glory lies

From this macabre scene, carrying symbolic telescope and mirror, emerges a fair maid who has been "nurs'd by Contemplation" in the cell of "mute Solitude." She proclaims that just as old forms constantly decay, new forms constantly arise. "Tho' Modes of Being change, all Life's immortal found." Man, furthermore, is distinguished from the rest of nature in a way which refutes gloomy botanical analogies

The rev'rend Oak, that circling Springs renew,
Thinks not, nor by long Age experienc'd grows,
Thy Fate and theirs confess no kindred Tie,
Tho' their frail Forms may fade, shall Sense and Reason die?

The poet is cheered by these arguments. Dawn breaks, and now all nature looks gay

Homeward I bend with clear unclouded Mind,
Mix with the busy World, and leave each Care behind

Can Denton be thinking of Spenser's "Mutability" cantos? At any rate both the similarities and the differences are interesting

My views on the origins of sentimentalism derive some support from Denton's *The House of Superstition. A Vision* (1766).²⁵ The verse form is

²⁵ Prefixed to the second edition of William Gilpin's *The Lives of John Wiclif, And of the Most Eminent of His Disciples, Lord Cobham, John Huss, Jerome of Prague, and Zisca*. The first edition of this book, 1765, does not contain Denton's poem. This is the Gilpin who won fame as an authority on "picturesque" scenery.

that of the preceding poem, the model for style and content is Spenser through *The Castle of Indolence*

In his vision the poet beholds a Gothic castle

Here Superstition holds her dreary reign,
And her lip-labor'd orisons she plies
In Tongue unknown,²⁶ when morn bedews the plain,
Or evening skirts with gold the western skies,
To the dumb stock she bends, or sculptur'd wall,
And many a cross she makes, and many a bead lets fall

In or about the castle dwell Tyranny (Superstition's husband), Ignorance, Error, Prejudice, Penance, and Persecution, with an unnamed "lazy lub-bard" who represents monasticism

No patriot voice awakes his languid eye
No calls of honour raise his drowsy head,
Impure he deems chaste Hymen's holy tie,
To all life's elegant endearments dead
No social hopes hath he, no social fears,
But spends in lethargy devout the ling'ring years

Also nameless, but readily identifiable as the Pope, is the child of Superstition and Tyranny He wishes to be thought a God whom

mazed mortals blindly must obey
With sleight of hand he lying wonders wrought,
And near him loathsome heaps of reliques lay
Strange legends would he read, and figments dire
Of Limbus' prison'd shades, and purgatory fire

The sinister enchantment of the castle is dispelled by the maiden Truth, followed by those heroes of the Reformation celebrated in Gilpin's book She snatches the clasped Bible from the Pope, opens it for all to see, and makes an encouraging speech to the Reformers The Reverend Thomas Denton is heir to the freedom thus instituted

The blind poet Thomas Blacklock (1721-1791)²⁷ was a minister of the Kirk of Scotland whose friendship with Hume and Beattie stamps him as a

²⁶ Popish Latin, of course

²⁷ Born in Annan of poor Cumberland parents Though smallpox destroyed his eyesight before he was six he entered Edinburgh University and became an excellent scholar In 1759 he was licensed as a preacher of the Kirk and in 1762 was appointed to a parish, but his flock did not want a blind minister and after two years of litigation he resigned and accepted an annuity From 1764 to 1787 he boarded and tutored young men in Edinburgh He corresponded with Beattie, who asked his advice about the *Essay on Truth* Probably at Beattie's suggestion, Aberdeen University granted him a D D in 1767 Collections of his poems appeared in 1746 (2d ed., 1754) and in 1756 He also published religious writings in prose

member of the "Moderate" party Though he was not an outrageously bad poet, it is chiefly as a brave and cheerful man that he finds a place in Chalmers He is not strikingly preromantic but admires scenery, Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton, and the "simple" nature which outvies art He gives us two songs in Scots dialect, and his last published work was *Graham, an Heroic Ballad* (1774)

A few traditionally pious remarks may be gleaned from Blacklock's poems An angel concludes the poet's vain attempts to find happiness by declaring

In God, in perfect good alone,
The anxious soul can find repose,
Nor to a bliss beneath his throne,
One hour of full enjoyment owes²⁸

Elsewhere hell's everlasting pains are described with gusto²⁹ On the whole, however, the religion expressed in Blacklock's poems is anything but that of a strict Calvinist His psalm-paraphrases depart so widely from the originals that in his version of the First Psalm he can write of the blessed man

Deep in herself his soul retir'd,
Unmov'd beholds the meteor blaze,
And, with all-perfect beauty fir'd,
Nature, and Nature's God, intent surveys

The phrase is a favorite one with Blacklock It occurs in an outburst against those who do not thrill to the moral beauties of Pope

Curst he! who, without ecstasy sincere,
The poet's soul effus'd in song can hear
His aid in vain shall indigence require,
Unmov'd he views his dearest friends expire
Nature and Nature's God that wretch detest,
Unsought his friendship, and his days unblest³⁰

And he approves of the Stoics because it was their aim

To bid mankind their end supreme pursue,
On God and Nature fix their wand'ring view³¹

²⁸ *The Wish Satisfied*

²⁹ *Elegy To the Memory of Constantia*

³⁰ *On the Death of Mr Pope An Elegy*

³¹ *Epistle III To Miss Annie Rae With the Manual of Epictetus, and Entablature of Cebes*

Blacklock is fond of addressing "hymns" or "odes" to such abstractions as Benevolence, Fortitude, Happiness, and Divine Love. Benevolence is apostrophized as a sort of *Anima Mundi*:

Far as the pointed sunbeam flies,
Through peopled Earth and starry skies,
All Nature owns thy nod
We see thy energy prevail
Through Being's ever-rising scale,
From nothing ev'n to God

By thee inspir'd, the gen'rous breast,
In blessing others only blest,
With goodness large and free,
Delights the widow's tears to stay,
To teach the blind their smoothest way,
And aid the feeble knee³³

Essentially the same concept is celebrated in more philosophical terms in *An Hymn to Divine Love In Imitation of Spenser*:

O Love! coeval with thy parent God,
To thee I kneel, thy present aid implore,
At whose celestial voice and pow'rful nod
Old Discord fled, and Chaos ceas'd to roar,
Light smil'd, and order rose, unseen before,
But in the plan of the eternal mind,
When God design'd the work, and lov'd the work design'd

One begins to see that Blacklock's sentimentalism is partly naturalistic (with a touch of Stoicism) and partly Platonic. The latter element is the stronger. Signs of it are frequent in such lines as

O Beauty, Harmony! ye sister train
Of Graces, you, who in th' admiring eye
Of God your charms display'd, ere yet, transcrib'd
On Nature's form, your Heav'nly features shone
Why are you snatch'd forever from my sight?³⁴

In the same vein he compares the genius of Homer to that divine "creative Energy" which produced the universe through "deep survey" of the eternal ideas.³⁴ But Platonism unites with a Newtonian sort of naturalism in *An Ode*

³³ *An Hymn to Benevolence*

³⁴ *A Soliloquy*

³⁴ *On the Death of Mr. Pope*

on the *Refinements of Metaphysical Philosophy* True wisdom, Blacklock insists, is to be found not in abstract speculation, but in contemplation of nature

In academic vales retir'd,
With Plato's love and beauty fir'd,
My steps let candour guide,

Or, while thro' Nature's walks I stray,
Would Truth's bright source emit one ray,
And all my soul inflame,
Creation, and her bounteous laws,
Her order fix'd, her glorious cause,
Should be my fav'rite theme

Nature and Nature's God, universal benevolence, harmony, beauty, love, a little Stoicism, a good deal of sentimentalized Platonism We might guess that the influence of Shaftesbury is at work even without reading *The Wish*, a retirement piece in which Blacklock aspires,

in wisdom's calm recess,
To brighten soft desire with wit refin'd,
Kind Nature's laws with sacred Ashley trace,
And view the fairest features of the mind!

From Calvin to Shaftesbury by way of the latitudinarianism of the "Moderates"—Blacklock's pattern is familiar

Even such optimism as Blacklock's is outstripped by an anonymous poem entitled *The Vindication, or, Day-Thoughts on Wisdom and Goodness Occasioned by the Complaint, or Night-Thoughts on Life, Death, and Immortality* (1753) According to the Preface the poem, which was written chiefly in 1742, is directed only against *Night I* of Young's work The author grants that in the ninth section Young has "in a few lines handsomely retracted the *complaining* doctrine of the *first* and the following seven, in all which *the Complaint* was continued, though mix'd with many excellent things, not well consisting with it" But he still feels justified in publishing this tardy protest, for *Night Thoughts* is liable to encourage belief in fatalism, and his chief aim is to attack that pernicious and "too fashionable" doctrine Young attempts to believe in Fate and God at the same time, but

If there is a god,
There is no Fate if Fate, there is no God

The real grounds of disagreement, however, are more temperamental than theological. The sanguine poet shrinks from Young's gloom, asking why one's midnight reflections need be melancholy

Why shou'd not such Reflections fill my Mind,
As place Religion in a *lovely* view,
Rather than such as give *Discouragement*
To every thing that's Good?

Young's attempt to increase our longing for heaven by painting mortal life in sombre hues is antipathetic to one who wants his happiness here and now. Why not look on the bright side of things? Most of our miseries are the fruit of our own misconduct, while others should be welcomed as divinely appointed trials. On the whole, everything is arranged for the best.

Volcanoes save the Earth
From numberless Concussions, which wou'd else
In various Places Desolations raise
And what necessity have men to fix
Their dwellings where such fierce Eruptions are?

From a historical point of view this writer's most important charge is that Young is a foe of benevolism.

The Tenor of your Poem is, *Complaint*,
Tending to raise and settle in the Mind
Repining, murmuring Thoughts against the Best,
The Wisest, the most Perfect Being in the World,
Tending to plant Despair within the Heart,
Prevent all cheerful Service where most due,
And indispose for social usefulness.

Evidently a cheerful, this-worldly religion of social service has taken definite form by 1753.

Equally cheerful though much more definitely evangelical is another answer to Young, *Religious Conscience Or, the Morning and Evening Sacrifice A Poem In Imitation of Dr Young's Night Thoughts* (1755). The "sacrifice" is the lifting up of a happy, grateful heart. Philander, the unknown poet, seeks rural solitude in a mood untouched by sour misanthropy.

Think not I fly the social joys of life,
If, when the coolness of a summer's eve
Invites me to the lawns, I steal from noise,
Survey the venerable scenes of night,

And listen to the language of the skies
 Philander's calmest, his serenest hours,
 Are lull'd by Solitude — Thrice happy He,
 That can with sweet complacency approach
 His heart, his soul, nor finds himself alone,
 When in himself retir'd The breast of man
 Is pregnant with the choicest gift of Heav'n

That gift is "Conscience," which apparently signifies assurance of salvation through the Blood of the Lamb. The distinctive feature of the poem is that this assurance is derived from experiences which would make most of his contemporaries indulge in vague remarks about "Nature and Nature's God." But this writer declares that when he goes out into the field at dawn,

'Tis there I view the Sun of Righteousness
 Arise, with balmy healing in his wings
 Then my rapt soul asserts that right to Heav'n
 Her dear Redeemer did to purchase die,
 Then my rapt soul her Gospel pinions spreads,
 Grasps hard the bleeding cross, and mounts the skies

Here then is a sentimental mould filled with evangelical content. Surely the author of *The Task* would approve of Philander's words

Come to the fields, thy Saviour will be there,
 Offer the matin song, and walk with God

I am not sure that the Reverend William Thompson (1712?–1766)³⁵ should be included in this chapter, but I do not know a better place for him. He is less sentimental in religion, much more the orthodox Christian, than some contemporaries whose preromantic qualities are less obvious. He also deserves attention as a poet of greater intrinsic merit than many other minor figures of the period who have been exhumed by the scholars. In his more ambitious flights he is often strained and turgid (too plainly he admires the "sublimity" of Aaron Hill),³⁶ and in his slighter pieces he prattles along too glibly. But though there is plenty of rhetoric in him, there is some imagination too. Respect is due an eighteenth-century poet who can write such lines as "What passionate tenderness bled in my breast," "In fostering dew, and

³⁵ The son of a Westmoreland vicar. From the famous Appleby School he went to Queens College, Oxford, where he took his M.A. in 1738 and became a fellow. Later he succeeded to two Oxfordshire livings. Though he began to write verse in his undergraduate days, his first publication was *Sickness, a Poem*, 1745. *Poems on Several Occasions* appeared in 1758.

³⁶ For Hill's qualities as a poet, see I, 447–53.

balm, and honey-show'rs," "A quivering splendour on the ocean hung,"
 "We dream of shadows, when we talk of life," "Thy pulse beats music "

Thompson's love of Elizabethan and early seventeenth-century literature is evidenced by much of his work. It is no surprise to learn that in 1753 he superintended an edition of Hall's *Virgideumiarum* and that on dying he left behind him materials on Browne of Tavistock which were used by Thomas Davies in his 1772 edition of that writer. A youthful tragedy, *Gondibert and Bertha*, was based on Davenant's poem. Shakespearian allusions and echoes are frequent. Sir Thomas Browne's *Vulgar Errours* is cited in the notes to *An Hymn to May*. This poem employs the stanza of Phineas Fletcher's *Purple Island*, a work which Thompson terms "the best in the allegorical way, (next to the Fairy Queen) in the English language."

There is further evidence that his favorite Elizabethan is the "Creative bard,"

Father of Fancy, of descriptive verse,
 And shadowy beings, gentle Edmund, hight
 Spenser! the sweetest of the tuneful throng,
 Or recent, or of eld⁸⁷

Spenser joins two contemporary poets in another passage which is less flattering to Thompson's powers of discrimination

Come, Contemplation! therefore, from thy haunts,
 From Spenser's tomb, (with reverent steps and slow
 Oft visited by me, certès, by all,
 Touch'd by the Muse) from Richmond's green retreats,
 Where Nature's bard the Seasons on his page
 Stole from the Year's rich hand or Welwyn groves,
 Where Young, the friend of virtue and of man,
 Sows with poetic stars the nightly song⁸⁸

For Thompson, the term "Contemplation" is probably less devoid of positive religious content than for most haunters of the pensive grove. Judging from his poems, he remained loyal to the faith of his parents. His father was a country parson, his mother, a country parson's daughter. The poet honored both of them in epitaphs which praise their simple piety. Of his father he says

His patron, Jesus! with no titles grac'd,
 But that best title, a good parish priest "

⁸⁷ *Sickness*, Book II

⁸⁸ *Ibid*, Book V

Thompson's piety blends with his admiration for Spenser in *The Nativity*. Though only a "College Exercise" written in 1736, it is distinctly his best work. The *Faerie Queene* stanza is well managed, the descriptive images are effective, and the whole poem breathes an air of devout and tender joy

Young laughing angels "Mercy, mercy," sung,
Heav'n echo'd back, the spheres with "Mercy" rung

The star of Bethlehem is thus described

Jocund to lead the way, with sparkling rays,
Danc'd a star-errant up the orient sky,
The new-born splendour streaming o'er the place,
Where Jesus lay in bright humility

"A star danced, and under it I was born." Few other men of the period would have thought of Shakespeare's Perdita at this moment.

Unusual also is the picture of the Virgin Mary

High-smiling in delight a lady sate,
Young as the dawning Morn, on iv'ry throne,
Upon her looks the virgin-virtues wait,
The virgin-virtues wait on her alone!
Her sapphire-eyes with gentle spirit shone
Fair bountyhead was open'd in her face,
Of honour and of love the paragon!
A sweet regard and most auspicious grace
Bespoke her lineage high she was of David's race

Unfortunately the Virgin and Child remind him of Pope's *Messiah*, and the poem ends with a jarring tribute to "the tuneful Twick'nham swain."

Although in reading *The Nativity* some allowance should be made for the influence of the Elizabethan model, the unmistakably Catholic quality of the poem sets Thompson apart from the other poets of this chapter. How much of this feeling he retained after leaving Oxford is hard to say. Later poems strike no peculiarly Anglo-Catholic notes. He is a strong anti-Jacobite, and apparently an admirer of Prince Frederick.³⁹ In addressing Richard Glover he can adopt the "nature-reason-liberty" jargon of latitudinarianism.⁴⁰ Nevertheless he remains, for his day, a distinctly "high" Churchman who responds with unusual warmth to the historic faith. *The Wedding Morn*

³⁹ See *Epithalamium on the Royal Nuptials in May, 1736*.

⁴⁰ *To the Author of Leonidas*. For Glover and his connection with the "Patriot" party see I, 272-73.

implies a very serious and lofty conception of Christian marriage. For him the Bible is more than a treasury of common sense

Ye sacred tomes, be my unerring guide,
Dove-hearted saints, and prophets eagle-ey'd!
I scorn the moral-fop, and ethic-sage,
But drink in truth from your illumin'd page ⁴¹

He can speak of "Nature's God," but immediately adds "the great Three-One" ⁴²

As one would expect, Thompson closely associates religion and poetry. He tells Milton's Urania that the prophets,

Those poets of the sky! were taught to chant
The glories of Messiah's reign by thee ⁴³

To a "modern wit, or rather pagan," who thinks of poetry only in connection with the ancients, he retorts

A priest dares tell you, Sion's hallow'd walks,
And that illumin'd mountain, where a God,
The God of my salvation, and I hope
Of thine, unutterable beauty beam'd,

me, desirous, draw
From Athens' owls, to Jordan's mystic dove
Thou sing of Nature, and the moral charms
Gild with thy painted Muse my fingers lift
The lyre to God! Jehova! Eloim!
Truth is my leader, only Fancy, thine
(Sweet Farinelli of enervate song!)
I quit the myrtle, for a starry crown ⁴⁴

I have been quoting from *Sickness*, a poem in five books which was published separately in 1745. Thompson's own recovery from smallpox occasioned this blend of information, description, moral and religious argument, and emotional piety. *Night Thoughts* and the Book of Job are strong influences, but the strain of bombast suggests Aaron Hill. The compound is not without glints of true poetic feeling.

¹ Thompson's remarks in this poem on the providential uses of adversity

⁴¹ *Written in the Holy Bible*

⁴² *Sickness*, Book I

⁴³ *Ibid*. See also *The New Lyre*, where Christ figures as his Muse

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, Book V

need not detain us Less conventional is a curious bit of religious delirium which recalls the closing scene of Marlowe's *Faustus*

What fury shakes
Her fiery sword, and intercepts the stars?
Ha! Amartia? Conscience, Conscience sends
Her griesly form, to blast me at my end

'Tis horrible!—O save me from myself!
O save me, Jesu!—Ha! a burst of light
Blends with the empyréum's azure tide,
While Faith, triumphant, swells the trump of God,
And shouting, "Where's thy victory, O Grave?
And where, O Death, thy sting?" I see her spread
Her saving banner o'er my soul (the cross!)
And call it to its peers

Sickness closes with a hymn of thanksgiving, addressed to the three Persons of the Trinity, which is unusual for its tone of fervent orthodoxy Especially noteworthy is his fully trinitarian view of the Holy Spirit

Eternal Paraclete! in order, last,
Equal in glory to Omnipotence
The first, as to the second, and from both
Proceeding, (O inexplicable name!)
Mystical link of the unnumber'd Three!
To learning, night, to faith, the noon-tide day
Soul of the universe!

Thou all my bed,
Most holy Comforter! in sickness smooth'd,
And violet-buds, and roses, without thorn,
Shower'd round the couch From darkness and the vale
Of shadowy Death, to pastures fair, and streams
Of comfort, thy refreshing right-hand led
My wearied soul, and bath'd in health and joy!

In Thompson, then, a rather "high" type of Anglican piety expresses itself with unexpected fulness and intensity Out of tune with his age, he looks toward the past in literary taste as in theology, but his preromantic fondness for the Elizabethans is not, as with most of his contemporaries, a vehicle for the cult of sentiment

The remainder of this chapter will be devoted to poets who flourished between 1760 and 1780. William Falconer (1732-1769)⁴⁵ in his well-known *Shipwreck* provides plenty of nautical information culminating in a scene of disaster which would be exciting except for his heroic verbiage. Palemon, the hero, is "tremblingly alive to Nature's laws" and endowed with an innate disposition toward virtue

His soul, where moral truth spontaneous grew,
No guilty wish, no cruel passion knew

Albert, the captain, has a Popean sort of religion which does not desert him in the catastrophe. He assigns some of his crew to the pumps, some to the halyards, and some to the helm, but he himself undertakes the more important duty of addressing the "Eternal Power" in a cheerfully teleological prayer

On thy supreme assistance we rely,
Thy mercy supplicate, if doom'd to die!
Perhaps this storm is sent with healing breath
From neigh'ring shores to scourge disease and death
'Tis ours on thine unerring laws to trust,
With thee, great Lord, "whatever is, is just"

At such a moment, of what use are the pagan philosophers?

In vain they'd teach us, at the latest breath,
To smile serene amid the pangs of death
Immortal Zeno's self would trembling see
Inexorable Fate beneath the lee

But the religion which supports Falconer's mariners, though not that of the Stoic, is not quite that of the Christian. The dying Palemon prays to God as

THOU SACRED POWER whose law connects
Th' eternal chain of causes and effects,

and his friend Arion points the concluding moral

Can sacred Justice these events ordain?
But, O my soul! avoid that endless maze
Where Reason, lost in endless error, strays,
As through the thorny vale of life we run,
Great CAUSE of all effects, THY WILL BE DONE!

⁴⁵ The son of an Edinburgh barber, he had a career in the navy and the merchant marine and was drowned at sea. Of his scanty poems, only *The Shipwreck* (1762, revised and enlarged, 1764) has any bearing on our subject. I have not seen *The Chaplain's Petition to the Lieutenants in the Ward Room*, which Chalmers describes as too indecent to be included in his collection.

This attempt to regard the God of Deism in a spirit which preserves vestiges of Christian feeling is for us the only noteworthy feature of Falconer's work

The career of Percival Stockdale (1736-1811)⁴⁶ was a varied one. In 1755, after a year at the University of Aberdeen, this son of a Northumberland vicar became a lieutenant in the Royal Welsh Fusileers. He left the army in 1757 and two years later was ordained deacon. As a substitute curate and "lecturer" in London he associated with Dr. Johnson, Goldsmith, Garrick, Hawkesworth, and Lyttelton, but finding no regular employment in the Church he went to Italy in 1767 and remained there for two years. In 1773, again in London, he took over from Guthrie the management of the *Critical Review* and edited the *Universal Magazine*. From 1773 to 1776 he served as chaplain in the navy. In 1780, taking priest's orders at last, he became rector of Hinworth in Hertfordshire, but three years later he left this living for a pair of Northumberland vicarages. The rest of his life was devoted to letters and, one hopes, to his flock.

If Stockdale had been a great poet, the critic would make much of his response to Northumbrian scenery, dwelling earnestly on lines which declare that in childhood the future bard shuns his playmates,

Feels the sweet charm of contemplation's power,
And steals from noise to her sequester'd bower
Or by more active instinct urged, he strays
Through nature's devious, and romantic ways,
Impatient seeks the venerable wood,
The rock impending, and the rushing flood.⁴⁷

But the mature Stockdale, though retaining "the love of simple nature," likes a more suburban kind of contemplation stimulated by a fine wide prospect,

Where commerce and where agriculture smile,
And show the matchless glory of our isle
In clouded majesty there London towers,
A striking contrast to Arcadian bowers.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ There is no complete collection of his verse, and I have not attempted to examine all of it. See the list of Primary Sources for the works here drawn upon. Stockdale wrote *Ximenes, a Tragedy* (1778), translated Tasso's *Aminta* (1770), and edited Thomson's *Seasons* with a memoir (1793). He also published sermons and many other prose works on a wide variety of subjects. Representative titles are *Life of Waller* (1772), *Three Discourses: two Against Luxury and Dissipation, one on Universal Benevolence* (1773), *An Inquiry into the Nature and Genuine Laws of Poetry, including a Particular Defence of the Writings and Genius of Pope* (1778), *Essay on Misanthropy* (1783), *A Remonstrance Against Inhumanity to Animals* (1802).

⁴⁷ *The Poet*

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

Yet the poet's pleasures, he insists, are never free from pain

From sensibility, that active spring,
Which gives rapidity to fancy's wing,
Rude shocks he feels, by which are dearly bought
His short-liv'd joys, his luxury of thought ⁴⁹

For Stockdale, however, these woes are tempered by a consciousness of rectitude which enables him to declare "Unestablished, and unprotected as I have always been, whenever I wrote a Dedication, ingenuous, and noble motives always predominated over an attention to my interest"

The religion of this palpitant genius, this candid soul, is a strange mixture of negative and positive elements. Though he fears that Pope "was inclined to be sceptical, if not deistical," he insists that this great poet's works "are fraught with a most elegant and beautiful morality, with the most expressive, and striking pictures, of the Divine Power, and Economy" ⁵⁰ No Medmenham Abbey wit could be a stouter foe of priestcraft than Stockdale. "The sincerity of the man is not warped, in *me*, by the hypocrisy of the priest

Missionaries are, in general, a meddling, mischievous, priestly set of people" ⁵¹ But this anticlerical cleric is quick to brand Tom Paine as "a vulgar, illiterate, and impious incendiary" ⁵²

As a hater of popery, of course, he stands on safe and solid ground

What boots, alas! a stupid Roman spell,
The cruel sackcloth, and the moss-grown cell?
Can such vain gew-gaws our Creator please?
No—there's no purity, no sense in these ⁵³

For such superstitions the great antidote is philosophy. Its function is

To chase the spectres of the dark Divine!
Not to fix error, but with reason's art,
To root the stiff old woman from the heart

To teach us to subdue the zealot's fire,
Not rashly to detest, nor to admire ⁵⁴

Philosophy, he adds, teaches us "By Bethlehem's candid star our course to steer", but what he means by this is hard to say. He reserves his deepest

⁴⁹ *Ibid*

⁵⁰ *A Letter to Mr Bryant, Occasioned by His Late Remarks on Mr Pope's Universal Prayer* (1793)

⁵¹ *Ibid*

⁵² *Ibid*

⁵³ *A Poetical Address to the Supreme Being*

⁵⁴ *The Poet*

reverence for the museum of Sir Ashton Lever, a hodgepodge of fossils, minerals, shells, stuffed birds, savage weapons, and so on. The sceptics who scorn "those who worship in a Christian fane" are exhorted

Repair to Lever's temple, and adore,
And blush, and shudder, and be fools no more
To mar your piety you'll find, at least,
No wanton organ, and no drawing priest

We, surely, tread on consecrated ground,
How Nature's Author strikes us all around!⁵⁵

Stockdale's "candid star" does not, after all, lead him to the manger, but illumines for him an

Harmonious world! where beings of each frame
In concert act with heaven's unerring aim⁵⁶

This priest-hating parson hankers for

such a happy mental frame
As rouses oft the holy Bramin's flame,
Who unemploy'd, unvex'd with aught below,
Stranger to vice, to folly, and to woe,
In sweet retirement fixes his abode,
Marks blooming Nature, and adores her God⁵⁷

Coming nearer home, he admires the Vicar of Wakefield,

Whose sermons recommend his generous deeds,
Who urges morals, and relaxes creeds,
Who makes the cause of human kind his own,
Who agonizes at the widow's groan⁵⁸

He is all for toleration, universal benevolence, and the social tear "Still warm me," runs his *Poetical Address to the Supreme Being*,

Still warm me with thy true Religion's flame,
Benevolence and It are sure the same,
Let me not form instead of substance court,
The idiot-actor of a holy sport,

⁵⁵ *A Poetical Epistle to Sir Ashton Lever*

⁵⁶ *The Poet*

⁵⁷ *A Poetical Address to the Supreme Being* Probably Stockdale is thinking of that curious piece of pseudo exotic sentimentalism, *The Oeconomy of Human Life* (1750), which absurdly purports to give the philosophy of a Brahmin sage. It is probably the work of Robert Dodsley

⁵⁸ *The Poet*

Let me detest a furious party-zeal,
And strive to forward universal weal

Let me the Good as friends and neighbours view,
An honest Turk, a Christian, or a Jew
Inspire my breast with sentiments humane,
And let me listen while the poor complain

Stockdale is certainly no ascetic. He feels himself more poet than parson, and is a defender of what Fra Lippo Lippi will call "the value and significance of flesh."

Poets reject the sacerdotal strain,
Their verse a foe to voluntary pain
They bid us all the sweets of life enjoy,
Which nor our conscience, nor our health annoy,
Bid us consider our ambiguous frame,
Nor think on earth to catch a seraph's flame
Be half to sense, and half to soul inclined,
Nor chill the body while we warm the mind⁸⁰

This poet is a valuable illustration of the relations between hard and soft latitudinarianism. A lover of cool reason and an enemy of superstitious zeal, he is nevertheless a champion of retired contemplation, "simple" nature, the feeling heart, and the good Brahmin. He also regards himself as a thoroughly sound minister of the Christian religion.

The remaining poets of this section represent a less advanced stage in the process which forms the main theme of our study. John Walters (1759-1789)⁸⁰ was the son of a Welsh clergyman. After obtaining his B.A. and M.A. at Jesus College, Oxford, he spent the remainder of his brief life as a schoolmaster and as rector of a parish in Wales. Few of his poems⁸¹ are explicitly "divine," but their general trend is edifying. The "soft soothing voice" of religion, he declares, pours balm upon man's spirit.⁸²

The religion thus praised is identifiable with Christianity. Walters seems less of a latitudinarian than his father, whose *Ode to Humanity*, printed by the son in his *Poems* of 1780, is all for tolerance and universal harmony, and

⁸⁰ *The Poet*

⁸¹ His publications in prose consist of sermons and *A Letter to Dr Priestley*, to which was appended *A Discourse on the Natural Connection of Civil and Ecclesiastical Establishments*. He also edited Ascham's *Toxophilus*.

⁸² He tells us that his *Poems* of 1780 were all "written before the Age of Nineteen."

⁸³ *On Religion*

very severe against zeal and bigotry The younger Walters, on the contrary, seems to have acquired at Oxford some High Church notions, for he condemns Cromwell and calls Laud an "illustrious martyr"⁸³ But no one can accuse him of popery he describes the Jesuits as enemies of honest scholarship and refers to monasteries as "gloomy haunts of ignorance and ease"⁸⁴

This Oxford student hails the Bodleian as an arsenal of apologetics where the future priest

each victorious weapon first employs
Whose force the atheist brood of Sin destroys,

And clad in Truth's immortal arms o'erthrows
Th' embattled legion of Religion's foes⁸⁵

His own polemics, however, are not very impressively displayed in *An Ode on the Immortality of the Soul Occasioned by the Opinions of Dr Priestley*⁸⁶ He briefly alludes to the Resurrection but relies chiefly upon the universality of the desire for immortal life To judge from this later poem, his Oxford High Churchmanship was not a hardy plant

Walters sometimes discloses tastes which are more preromantic than most of his poems would suggest Thomas Warton, he believes, has superseded Pope⁸⁷ With youthful shamelessness he imitates Gray in *Life An Elegy* In the following stanza appear two leading humanitarians of the day

Some Howard here may sleep, whose pitying breast
At wants and woes he could not heal, repin'd,
In his pale shroud some Hanway here may rest,
Unblest with power to benefit mankind

But the deathbed of Addison is used to show that distrust and fear have no place in "the pure breast which holy hope inspires"

This writer's strongest claim to mention in the annals of the romantic revival is provided by *Translated Specimens of Welsh Poetry in English Verse With Some Original Pieces, and Notes* (1782) If Walters had any firsthand knowledge of the traditional poetry of his native land, nothing in this little volume bears witness to the fact The three "translated specimens" are confessedly imitations of poems already published and translated into

⁸³ *The Bodleian Library* To some extent, probably, the subject determines the author's attitude Laud gave the Bodleian 1,300 manuscripts, while Cromwell wished to destroy it

⁸⁴ *Ibid*

⁸⁵ *Ibid*

⁸⁶ Published in 1786 with *Life An Elegy* and his father's *Ode to Humanity*, which had already appeared in the *Poems* of 1780

⁸⁷ *The Bodleian Library*

Latin by Evan Evans Walters admiringly refers to Gray's use of the same source *Llewellyn and His Bards*, one of the "original pieces," is in octosyllabic couplets but is strongly influenced by Gray's *Bard*

In a Wartonish *Ode to Cambria*, Walters invokes the "ancient Genius" of Wales

Oh, lead thou me in strains sublime
Thy sacred hill of oaks to climb,
To haunt thy old poetic streams,
And sport in fiction's fairy dreams,
There set the rover Fancy free,
And breathe the soul of poesy!

There is nothing to suggest that this inspiration has any bearing upon religion. Two of his translations render devout remarks which lead him to say in a note "The Welsh bards, like the poets of the East, frequently open and conclude their performances with a fine strain of piety." The *Ode to Cambria* refers with conventional zest to "dreadful rites, and Druids old." All one can say is that Walters's feeble Celticism is perhaps a trifle warmer than his Christianity.

The religion of Charles Jenner (1736-1774)⁶⁸ is an unenthusiastic Christianity which has softened just enough to warrant his inclusion in this chapter. *The Gift of Tongues* and *The Destruction of Nineveh*, which won the Seatonian Prize in 1767 and 1768 respectively, are stock examples of a type which was described in Chapter III. Probably *The Crucifixion* represents an unsuccessful attempt to win the same honor. It runs through the main events of Holy Week up to the scene on Calvary, but the concluding lines point forward to the victory of the Resurrection.

An accomplished musician, Jenner regards the Crucifixion from a very different point of view in these lines on Pergolesi's *Stabat Mater*

Sweet Pergolesi! thy pathetic chords
Can give to Sounds, the energy of Words

Hark! how the Virgin's plaints affect the Ear,
We feel her woes, we see her gushing tear
The sounds with such simplicity complain,
They seem but as the genuine voice of pain.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ The son of a clergyman of good family. He was educated at Cambridge and held livings in Leicestershire and Northamptonshire.

⁶⁹ *Epistle on Vocal Music*

Jenner's numerous fables, which rise a little above the level of his usual submediocrity, are ethical rather than religious. When he is not competing for a Seatonian Prize, he prefers a broad, cheerful, and rather tender kind of moral didacticism. Sometimes this is combined with a hazy sort of piety, as when Patience is exhorted to descend

From the bright regions of eternal Day,
Where, in inspired Notes, glad Cherubs sing
In one enraptur'd, never-ceasing Lay,
To Nature's God, her Father and her King ⁷⁰

Dispensing with any such appeal to the supernatural, the *Ode to Modesty* Miltonically hails the "blushing, meek-ey'd Maid," and banishes her anti-thesis

Hence leering Wantonness!
And froward Air, betraying impure thought!
Your aim ye always miss,
Man's heart must be by milder methods sought,
No bare, unbaited hook a fish e'er caught

Just as honesty is the best policy, so modesty is the best fish bait ⁷¹

Jenner regards benevolence as heaven's choicest gift, but he defines that virtue in somewhat Chesterfieldian fashion as "A constant strong desire to please" ⁷² This amiable clergyman, in fact, is not without a kind of insensitivity in matters spiritual. The defect is further exemplified when he invites himself to drink curative waters with Stella in a poem which concludes

And fear not but we shall at length
Adore that Pow'r divine,
Who out of weakness brings forth strength,
And Water turns to Wine ⁷³

Much more definitely a sacred poet is Lemuel Abbott (d 1776), ⁷⁴ whose chiefly "divine" *Poems on Various Subjects* was published at Nottingham in

⁷⁰ *Stanzas To Patience*

⁷¹ Evidence that he admires Spenser as well as Milton is provided by *Sonnet IV After the manner of Spenser To Stella Lamenting that she could not sing*. It is not a sonnet but consists of two Spenserian stanzas in slightly archaic language. The point is that Stella does not need to sing, with those eyes

⁷² *The Son of Jupiter Fable I*

⁷³ *Sonnet I To Stella at Bristol hot well*. He often applies the term "sonnet" thus loosely

⁷⁴ Nothing is known about him except that in 1756 he became curate of Ansty in Leicestershire and in 1773 vicar of Thornton in the same county. The volume here examined seems to be his only publication

1765 His treatment of religious themes is emotional and at least in intention imaginative, but he is not sufficiently gifted to write the sort of poetry which he plainly aspires to write

As his sensible *Short Essay on the Structure of English Verse*⁷⁶ suggests, Abbott has a fondness for rhythm. Hence in his poems he takes a lyrical turn and sings more often than he argues. He favors pseudo-pindarics of the "for music" kind, nonliturgical hymns, and sacred cantatas. Many of these paraphrase Scripture, but his treatment of the original is usually very free. *The Song of Moses, When Pharaoh and his Host were drowned in the Red Sea* may stand for several other pieces of the same kind.

Thy right Hand, O Lord,
 So glorious in Power! be ever ador'd,
 Thy right Hand in Pieces hath dash'd the proud Foe,
 The Rebels who rose
 Thy Will to oppose,
 Thou didst in thine excellent Greatness o'erthrow,
 The Breath of thine Ire
 Consum'd them like Stubble devour'd by the Fire

In his original poems Abbott seems aware of the difference between nature and supernature, for he insists that

The vivid Beauties of this Globe

Have Pow'r to charm the wond'ring Mind,
 But not to satisfy⁷⁶

Theology, however, appeals to him so little that he makes one angel rebuke another in the words

Lov'd Fellow-cherub, vainly sound no more
 Th' unfathomable Depths of Grace to Man,
 But gaze with me, and wonder, and adore—
 'Tis all that mortal, all that Angel can!⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Prefixed to *Poems on Various Subjects*. His main conclusion runs: "The Quantity being determined by the Accent, and the Accent by the Sense and Signification, English Verse stands upon a rational Foundation, and has a Grandeur and Dignity which seem to disdain the having its Feet confined by *literal* Rules, or by any but those which are formed upon the *Meaning*; it is intended to convey. He recognizes secondary accent and has some notion of syllabic equivalence.

⁷⁶ *An Hymn to the Deity*

⁷⁷ *A Dialogue of Angels*

His picture of *Nuptial Felicity* leads a virtuous and pious pair through a smugly happy life to the affecting close

Then, ravish'd at th' immortal Bliss
That waits them in the Sky,
With a last, tender, parting Kiss
They bid adieu, and die

Verses Written on the Death of Two Friends displays the same desire to greet the unseen with a smirk The "Raptures" which "fill my swelling Heart" in *Ode to Fancy* are pretty little feelings of no depth or intensity

To the Admirers of Jacob Behmen is, as one would expect, heartily unsympathetic It is not of much interest to us, however, because it attacks Behmen chiefly as a pseudo-scientist rather than as a mystic We wonder what obscure circle of cranks is mocked in such lines as these

Would ye be told of strange unheard of Whims,
Romantic Visions, wild amazing Dreams,

Of wrathful Flints, and Earth that Anguish feels,
And fiery Trigons, with their whirling Wheels?
Unveil'd, and stripp'd, and robb'd of all her Glory,
Would you see naked Nature pass before ye?

Ye Conj'ers, strait a magic Circle draw,
Where burn at once the Gospel and the Law,
This done, take Jacob Behmen from the Shelf,
Read him—and wiser be than God himself

This is not the aspect of Behmenism which influenced William Law, John Byrom, and Henry Brooke Such mysteries, however, would be of some interest to Christopher Smart

Three of Abbott's poems, read in sequence, clearly illustrate the sentimentalizing of Christianity In *The Picture of Christ* he speaks of the "gracious Heart" of Jesus,

That Fountain whence his Life-blood flows
In Streams of Mercy to his Foes,
That Heart that bids his Murd'ers live,
And saves them by the Wounds they give

Here both thought and expression are thoroughly orthodox But *An Ode to Charity*, although it begins as a paraphrase of I Corinthians xiii, ends with lines which would puzzle St Paul

Come, Charity, all-lovely Guest!
Oh! come, possess, and fill my Breast!

Wide, wide, diffuse thy genial Rays,
 Absorb all Nature in thy Blaze
 All ravish'd Nature then shall prove
 God-like Delights, for God is Love!

The idea that charity is to be cultivated as a means of obtaining "ravishment" bids fair to corrupt the meaning of "God is love." And so the being addressed in *An Hymn to the Creator* is simply the God of the more sentimental portions of the *Essay on Man*

With humble transport I admire
 Thy Love, that active, genial Fire,
 Prompt to create, and bless,
 This will'd, in whatsoe'er should be,
 The greatest possible Degree
 Of *gen'ral* Happiness

This is the best of all possible systems for the furtherance of that aim Good proceeds from evil, vice and folly are meant for "noblest use", "And thus what *is*, is *best*" The heart of this deity is very different from the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Nothing remains of God's terrible love but a genial desire to be useful

The *Poetical Works* of the Reverend Samuel Bishop (1731-1795)⁷⁸ fill two large volumes, but their editor assures us that they have been culled "from an even greater number." We must be equally selective in our treatment of him, for the chaff is out of all proportion to the wheat. Least negligible are those pieces grouped as "Odes,"⁷⁹ which seem to belong to an early period of serious though deluded poetic ambition.

The Preacher is said to be written "In Imitation of Milton," but its blank verse more closely resembles that of Young. Divine vengeance is at times, he says, a necessary theme for sermons, but the preacher's "supreme delight" should be to deal with

Incarnate Deity, the Word, the Life,
 The Word of Life, the Life of Righteousness,
 The very consubstantial Son of God,
 Become thy Advocate, thy Expiation,
 Thy Health, thy Stay, thy Heritage for ever!

⁷⁸ An Oxford man. Though he ended his life as Rector of St. Martin Outwich, London, he is remembered chiefly as headmaster of the Merchant Taylors' School, which he had attended as a boy. In 1796 his *Poetical Works* were edited with a memoir by his widow's second husband, the Reverend Thomas Clare. He also published Latin verses and sermons.

⁷⁹ Only two or three of them are formally classifiable as odes.

This more or less evangelical fervor, however, is rare in Bishop's work. He is strong for usefulness and frowns upon all retirement except that which rewards a life of public service.⁸⁰ His *Man of Taste* possesses "the social consciousness serene" and is convinced that

The Almighty word, which form'd this ball,
Made Man for Man, and All for All

In general his benevolism is of the cheerfully practical, not the tenderly tearful, sort. Once at least it is associated with the vested interests of an eighteenth-century schoolmaster

Thus with early culture blest,
Thus to early toil inur'd,
Infancy's expanding breast
Glow with Sense and Powers matur'd,
Whence if future efforts raise
Moral, social, civil praise,
Thine is all th' Effect—be thine
The Glory—CLASSIC DISCIPLINE!⁸¹

A good epitome of the genteel tradition in British education

But Bishop has his softer moments, as when he pictures the Queen at the bedside of her infant sons

Oft Fancy, prompted by concern,
To urge an half-form'd tear began,
And Hope, that made her bosom burn,
Finish'd the pearl, and down it ran.⁸²

He can write with unconvincing warmth on such subjects as *Day*

Health, O Day, exults to greet thee!
Lusty strength springs forth to meet thee!
Enterprise is fond to use thee!
Hope, midst gathering gloom, renews thee!
Science! Genius! love to trace thee,
Grac'd by thee, and skill'd to grace thee!

Hymn on the Spring rebukes and threatens the sceptic who refuses to see the hand of God in "The rising flowers, the budding trees"

⁸⁰ *Ode VIII To the Earl of Lincoln on the Duke of Newcastle's Retirement*. Bishop's wife, Mary Palmer, was in some way related to the Duke.

⁸¹ *Ode III On Classic Discipline*. "Perhaps the most striking feature in his character," says Thomas Clare in his memoir of Bishop, "was this, that he could render even the office of a school-master engaging."

⁸² *Ode II To the Queen on Her Birthday* (1764). Clare describes this poem as "distinguished for tender sensibility, united with elegant simplicity of expression."

Even less rewarding is the long section of the *Works* entitled "Verses on Occasional Subjects Spoken at Merchant Taylors' School, on the Days of Public Examination"⁸³ These humble effusions on such varied subjects as *Dinner*, *Natural Philosophy*, *The Vocative Case*, and *The Beetle* generally point a moral with distressing pedagogical archness and sometimes strike a note of sensible piety The only interesting one defines *Genius* as comprehending all those "sparks of heavenly Radiance" which force their way into man's mind through the mists of mortal life It raises man above the rest of nature, for it "leaves Time, Place, and Substance still behind"

But this thought becomes less impressive when, turning to the large group of "Epigrams," we read

Look round on SUNDAY SCHOOLS—and own
That English Genius there hath shone,
In style august, tho' new
Our fathers felt for general weal,
We—chang'd, but not degenerate, feel
For general Virtue too!⁸⁴

Not all of the epigrams are so abysmal A pleasantly edifying example runs

Before you trust men, try 'em, proverbs say,
But how d'ye try men, till you trust 'em, pray?⁸⁵

The blend of humor and didactic earnestness which characterizes Bishop when he is not trying to write "odes" is embodied in the lines

Need from excess—excess from folly growing,
Keeps Christie's hammer daily, going, going!
Ill-omened prelude! whose dire knell brings on
Profusion's last sad dying speech—"Gone! Gone!"⁸⁶

Bishop's loftier efforts, as we have seen, illustrate a slightly sentimentalized Christianity Soon, however, he settles down into what he really is—a moralizing scribbling schoolmaster with a common-sense ethical religion faintly tinged by Evangelicalism

James Scott (1733-1814)⁸⁷ was the son of a Yorkshire clergyman On receiving his M A from Trinity College, Cambridge, in 1760 he carried off

⁸³ Apparently he wrote these for his students to deliver at the exercises

⁸⁴ *Epigram C*

⁸⁵ *Epigram VI*

⁸⁶ *Epigram CXXXV*

⁸⁷ His poems have never been collected, but they represent so interesting a "case" that I have thought them worth discussing He also published sermons

the Seatonian Prize with *Heaven A Vision* The form is the pseudo-Spenserian ten-line stanza, with some attempt at Spenserian diction to accord with the vision device The sleeping poet first sees the Mohammedan paradise, a variant of Spenser's Bower of Bliss, which is lusciously described Just when he reaches a climax of "voluptuous Hope" an angel reprehends his fleshliness and relates the joys of the *true* heaven The poet himself is granted one dazzling glimpse of them,

But where, ah where can glowing tints be found
To paint the charms of Sion's sacred place,
Where Christ the Lamb in radiance sits enthron'd,
The lively Image of his Father's Grace?
O Flower of love! O glorious Morning star!
O Sun of Righteousness, whose healing wings
Brought life, and peace, and mercy from afar!
From Thee the light, thou beaming Fountain, springs,
That guides poor mortals on their weary way,
Thro' black Affliction's night, to Pleasure's endless day!

For a Seatonian poem, *Heaven* is unusually colorful and passionate

In the following year the resourceful poet won the prize a second time by using a very different style The trite ideas of *Purity of Heart A Moral Epistle* are vivified in a series of "characters" The witty-solemn satirical preaching of Young's *Love of Fame* is cleverly imitated

'Tis Nature's law, voluptuous Clodio cries,
Steaming from stews, and brothel revelries,
'Tis Nature's law, decrepid Hircus swears,
Love-sick, and lewd, at more than seventy years

How was the prize for 1762 to be carried off? Scott decided to try the Milton-melancholy-retirement-contemplation mixture, and wrote *An Hymn to Repentance* Worldly pleasures are banished, and Repentance, "Goddess of the tearful Eye," is summoned

Oh come with Ashes sprent, in Sackcloth drest,
And wring thy piteous Hands, and beat thy plaintive Breast

Such was thy form, O heaven-descended Maid,
When at her dearest Saviour's feet,
Bedew'd with tears, and Odours sweet,
Poor Magdalene repentant wept, and pray'd
She wept, and swiftly to the Sky
The Steam, like hallow'd Incense rose,

When lo her Sins of Scarlet dye
 Grew white as Wool, or Mountain-snows
 The Morning Stars with Joy triumphant rang,
 And all the Sons of God their loud Hosannas sang!

But Repentance must not beat her breast *too* hard—that would be fanaticism
 In approaching, she is to leave behind Penance, Enthusiasm, Remorse, and
 Despair Later in the poem Scott bids the “silken sons of Pleasure”

Go where the loose-rob'd Forms of wild Desire
 Expand their Wanton Charms, and press the buxom Choir!

As for him, he prefers

Some hoary Hermit's moss-grown Seat,
 Far from the guilty World's tumultuous Din,

Where Nature's various Charms, all rude of Art, delight,

and where “Contemplation dwells, that hoary Sire”

In 1763 the thrice-victorious Scott again stood forth as a contender for the
 Seatonian laurel *The Redemption* eschews theological argument and in-
 struction for pathetic narrative sprinkled with pious exclamations “The
 poetical Reader need not be told,” says the Advertisement, “that the metre
 is an imitation of that, which Milton hath used in his *Lycidas*” To no avail
 —the prize went to John Hey's soberly didactic poem on the same subject.
 Perhaps the judges thought Scott's effusion a trifle too enthusiastic, perhaps,
 like the modern reader, they felt that his emotional religiosity was becoming
 rather mechanical

Averting our eyes from this disaster we return to the year 1761, when the
 poet published *Odes on Several Subjects* The sentimentalism of the volume,
 pervasive though not extreme, is seen in these lines on a Negro slave who in
 his slumbers

Recalls the joys he felt of old,
 When wand'ring with his sable Maid
 Thro' groves of vegetable gold,
 He clasp'd her yielding to his raptur'd breast,
 And free from guile his honest soul exprest⁸⁸

Evidently Scott husbanded his pious ardor for Seatonian purposes the
 odes are not rich in religion *To Wisdom*, however, is noteworthy because it

⁸⁸ *On Sleep*

combines the familiar contemplative joys of rural retirement with an incongruous kind of literary pleasure

Whether thy easy flowing page,
O Tillotson, my thoughts engage,

Or, Sherlock, charm'd I find in thee
Death swallow'd up in Victory!
Then, O sweet Virgin [Wisdom], to my heart
The sacred heav'n fraught truths impart,
While in my self-collected soul
Enthusiastic raptures roll!

This leap from Tillotson and Sherlock to enthusiastic raptures will not seem wholly illogical to readers who have observed the relationship between latitudinarianism and sentimentalism

Scott seems to take little interest in science, but *On Sculpture*, after mentioning the Roubiliac statue of Newton in the antechapel of Trinity College, Cambridge, warmly digresses

Hail mighty Mind! hail awful Name!
I feel inspir'd my lab'ring breast,
And lo I pant, I burn for fame!
Come Science, bright æthereal guest,
Oh, come, and lead thy meanest, humblest son,
Thro' wisdom's arduous paths to fair renown!

This of course is the statue which was later to impress the young Wordsworth (When the chapel door is open, Newton's effigy stands in a direct line of vision from the cross at the centre of the altar—a polarity which symbolizes much in the history of ideas)

That Scott dedicated his *Odes* to the Marquis of Rockingham probably implies a stirring of politico-ecclesiastical ambitions. He could not subsist indefinitely on the rents of Thomas Seaton's Kissingbury estates and was ill suited to the life of a clerical don. His ambitions were still unsatisfied in 1763, the luckless year of *Redemption*, when he also published *Every Man the Architect of his own Fortune Or the Art of Rising in the Church*. Here he develops the satirical strain which first appeared in *Purity of Heart*. "The Plan consists of two opposite characters, one that of a base, venal, time-serving Scoundrel, who would dash through thick and thin to come at preferment; the other that of a worthy, conscientious, honest man, who cannot pull down his thoughts to the wicked, dirty, pelting Businesses of

Life " Scott, of course, is the honest man From the following lines it is clear that he has decided to follow in the steps of Churchill

Good Heav'n forbid that I a plain blunt man,
Who cannot fawn, and loath the wretch who can,
Should brook, a trencher-chaplain at the board,
The loud horse-laugh, and raillery of my Lord,
Slave to his jokes, his passion, and his pride,
A dull tame fool for Lacqueys to deride!

Churchill would agree with Scott's description of the true clergyman as

No sly fanatic, no enthusiast wild,
No party tool, beguiling and beguil'd,
No slave to pride, no canting pimp to pow'r,
No rigid churchman, nor dissenter sour

Here a note expresses the tolerant view "A wise man would wish to be thought a moderate churchman, or a mild dissenter—There is very little (what a pity it is there should be any) difference betwixt them "

Thenceforward Scott was purely a satirist By 1765 he had attached himself to Lord Sandwich—not as private chaplain, for that sinecure was preempted by a baboon Inspired by his lordship, he contributed to the *Public Advertiser*, under the pseudonym "Anti-Sejanus," a series of prose diatribes against Bute In 1771 Sandwich gave him his reward—the rectory of Simonburn in Northumberland After twenty years some of his flock, for reasons unknown to me, attempted to kill him He then retired to London, where we hear no more of him

Someone has pasted into the British Museum copy⁸⁰ of *Every Man the Architect of his own Fortune* a clipping, signed "Philo-Cacchinus," from a 1766 issue of the *St James Chronicle* The writer describes Scott not only as an unscrupulous satirist but as "a man of Fashion, a Libertine, raking, rhyming Parson" who has "even boasted in a public Coffee Room, the Favours of a Lady of unsullied Reputation" The accusations are plainly malicious, but one fears that they are not wholly unfounded Scott at first had some poetry in him, and some religion, but the seed fell upon very shallow ground

Not much is known of Abraham Portal (fl 1790)⁸⁰ His father was a clergyman of Huguenot descent Abraham was first a goldsmith, then a bookseller,

⁸⁰ Pressmark is T 1558 (3)

⁸⁰ This is the date given in *DNB*, but since his *Poems* were published in 1781 he belongs in this volume

and finally a boxkeeper at Drury Lane John Langhorne, the translator of Plutarch, was one of his friends His poems vary considerably in literary quality and religious temper Perhaps they cover a considerable span of years, but we lack sufficient dates to draw any curve of development

A Devotional Thought is a poem of some spiritual insight When Portal looks at the sky, the earth, the ocean, he feels crushed into insignificance,

But when with bolder ken my fancy dares
Pierce through thy works and soar beyond the stars,
There view thee on thy everlasting throne
Pouring thy judgments and thy mercies down,
I fear, I love, I tremble, I adore,
And wonder at man's littleness no more,
Skies, earth, and seas with marvels cease to shine,
And sink beneath the human soul divine

One also likes *A Morning Elegy*, which combines fairly good description with a definitely Christian reverence The sun rises

Fitted to mortal eye, his splendors mild
More great appear than at meridian height,
So shone the holy Virgin's heav'nly child,
Disclosing grace divine to human sight ⁹¹

But *A Hymn to Charity*, while much more than an outpouring of pseudo-Christian benevolism, sets our teeth on edge by presenting Jesus as the dutiful servant of a moral personification Charity is informed that

On earth to spread thy precepts wide
The great Messiah came,
For *thee* he liv'd, for *thee* he died,
To consecrate thy flame

This is merely a rhetorical device, but it betrays some insensibility to religious values It is puzzling, too, to find in the *Elegy on the Death of the Rev John Langhorne, D.D.* no other hint of consolation than that his friend will live in the memory of men

The path descends more and more steeply From the following key phrases, the reader can reconstruct for himself *The Rural Philosopher, or, Sacrifice to Humanity, An Elegy* "Straw-crown'd cot unspoil'd by art, blest Nature's child genuine wisdom Pow'r divine humble shed

⁹¹ *An Evening Elegy* resembles the poem here quoted Portal applies the term "elegy" to any poem in Gray's stanza

lowly vail blessings Nature's hand bestow'd domestic Pleasures
 Few are my wants, still fewer are my fears social breast gaudy pageants
 sons of wealth and pow'r " Portal's "social heart" also overflows in a
 series of four *Nuptial Elegies* This stanza will suggest their tenderness and
 impeccability

Who can disclose the bosom's secret folds,
 Or paint the smile that marks the parent's face,
 When he, with trembling ecstasy beholds
 The lovely blessings of the chaste embrace?

Innocence, a fifty-four page poem in Miltonic blank verse, is a medley of description, moral and religious platitudes, and illustrative idylls—the worst side of Thomson sedulously imitated The background of the poem is Christian, but *Innocence* herself is regarded as a deity Since the poem has no definite form, we must wander aimlessly through typical parts of its mazes

For Portal the innocence of the Hanoverian line, as it stretches from the present into the future, is unbearably dazzling

Why beats my heart? Why from the coming ray
 Do my dim eyes avert? O 'tis too much,
 My Muse! quick shrowd me from the lust'rous train,
 Lest Fancy droop opprest, and let me see
 But half their numbers, or but half their charms

Passing over a long, silly passage on the innocence of the Golden Age, we pause at a sketch of the virtuous rich man, who can indulge unstintedly the

heart-felt rapture! exquisite delight!
 Sole happiness on earth unfleeting! that
 Of doing good!

But though innocence is confined to no class, it is most often found in "the middle state,"—a fact which occasions a eulogy of golden mediocrity

Then there is the tale of Honorio, a rich but virtuous young squire who early one morning

Roam'd forth contemplative, in all his works
 Viewing the great Creator, not without
 Rapt'rous devotion, and ecstatic joy

In a summer house on his estate he finds a fair maiden, asleep The wind lifts the soft drapery from her bosom Inflamed, he meditates liberties But

Heaven arouses his better nature, and he is shocked at his moment of weakness

With that his cloak upon the slumb'ring nymph
Gently he laid, each soft temptation from
His greedy eye close covering

The consequent joy of the birds awakens the nymph She blushes, and in less than no time they are engaged to be married

Throughout the poem runs the assumption that innocence is a peculiarly Christian virtue The symbolic appropriateness of the lamb and the dove is glanced at, as is Our Lord's love for little children But the religious element of the poem is thin and spurious up to the concluding address to Christ, which begins

O my soul,
Now, while the transport fires me, let my harp
Be strung to him, the everlasting God,
Yet, mystery amazing! Son of man,
Who deign'd on earth of perfect innocence
Sole pattern to appear O! ever bless'd,
In whatsoever name delighting most
Let me adore thee Son of the Most High,
Eternal word, by which the heav'ns and earth
Were call'd to being, dread Immanuel,
Great Prince of Peace, Almighty Love divine,
Saviour of man, most holy *Jesus!*

These lines are not poetically important, but they seem to betoken strong and genuine Christian emotion Portal, then, is something of a puzzle Perhaps he represents a rather soft and pliant Evangelicalism which, when expressed in poetry, is often not strong enough to resist the influence of the cult of sentiment

A general discussion of sentimentalized Christianity as it appears in the poets of this period must be reserved for the close of the next chapter, but a few points may here be gathered up Leaving out of account the anonymous authors of *Miscellany Poems on Moral Subjects*, *The Vindication*, and *Religious Conscience*, fifteen poets have been considered Seven of these flourished between 1740 and 1760, and eight between 1760 and 1780 There are eight Anglican clergymen, one minister of the Kirk, two laymen, and four women—perhaps the predominance of clerical and feminine influence is worth noting Three of the total number may be assigned to the gentry,

but the atmosphere of the chapter is far from aristocratic. The political views of these writers do not seem to be significant factors in their poetry.

Chiefly for nonliterary reasons, Falconer obscurely survives in the memory of Englishmen. Elizabeth Carter is also remembered, but not as a poet. All the others are forgotten, and on the whole deservedly so. Not all of them are contemptible, but none of them except William Thompson arouses more than a very lukewarm respect.

The poets of this chapter differ not only in the degree of their sentimentalism but in the quality of their Churchmanship. They are all more emotional than the "Unenthusiastic Christians" of Chapter III, but their feelings lack depth and consistency. Thompson is exceptional in that his most interesting poems have an Anglo-Catholic tinge. Mary Latter, Elizabeth Keene, Jenner, and Walters are colorless. Thomas Denton shows symptoms of an aggressively "low" Anglicanism. Abbott, Portal, and Bishop (in his more earnest pieces) seem influenced by Evangelicalism. Catherine Jemmat, Elizabeth Carter, Blacklock, Falconer, Stockdale, and Scott (except as a prizewinner) are latitudinarians—the largest and most clearly defined group. We may infer that once sentimentalism has emerged it may combine with any phase of the development of Protestantism.

Perhaps the 1760–1780 group exhibits the traits of sentimentalism a little more clearly than the 1740–1760 group. But the difference, if real, is very slight, and in any case the list is too small to possess any statistical validity.

Chapter VIII

CHRISTIAN SENTIMENTALISTS

THE POETS OF THE PRECEDING CHAPTER WERE LABELLED "SENTIMENTAL CHRISTIANS", we pass on to "Christian Sentimentalists." The shift in title is admittedly rather fanciful and subjective: one cannot run a surveyor's transit between the two groups. On the whole, however, the writers now to be considered will impress the reader as more emphatically and consistently sentimental, and so far as their poetry is concerned even less definitely Christian, than those of Chapter VII. They are also usually richer in those "preromantic tendencies" through which sentimentalism finds literary expression. While the poets of Chapter VII are almost equally divided between the 1740-1760 and the 1760-1780 periods, eleven of the fourteen poets to be considered in the present chapter flourished after 1760. Hence instead of dividing them into two sections I have arranged them in a roughly chronological order based upon the date of the writer's first substantial published work.

Although by no means an Evangelical, Gilbert West (1703-1756)¹ was one of the rather numerous rational-minded and cultivated men of the period who discovered that Christianity was after all a more satisfying answer to their religious problems than deism. From youthful scepticism he advanced to the solid piety which led Dr. Johnson to describe him as "one of the few poets to whom the grave might be without its terrors." He corresponded with Doddridge and was a close friend of the good Lord Lyttelton,² whose growth in orthodoxy paralleled his own. His *Observations on the Resurrection* (1747) strikes the modern reader as a cold, niggling,

¹ The son of a scholarly clergyman of good family, he was educated at Eton and Christ Church, Oxford, where he received his B.A. in 1725. After brief experience as an army officer he entered the service of Lord Townshend, then Secretary of State, but after marrying in about 1729 he retired to his country place in Kent to lead a quiet, scholarly, pious life.

² See *Religious Trends in English Poetry*, I, 398, for evidence that Lyttelton, contrary to the common impression, was not converted by West's *Observations*.

legalistic piece of "evidence" apologetics, but it was translated into French and German and was frequently reprinted up to 1841

Since West's religion was thoroughly unpoetical, it is not surprising that his poetry is almost entirely unreligious. Chiefly remembered as the translator of Pindar, he was not a prolific writer of original verse. Nor are his translations rich in religious implications. To his version of Pindar, Joseph Warton contributed a complimentary ode glancing scornfully at "The fearful, frigid lays of cold and creeping Art", but West himself merely promises that we shall find in Pindar "a great deal of good sense, many wise reflections, and many moral sentences, together with a due regard to religion."

West's translation of *The Hymn of Cleanthes*, however, shows how easily the ideas of an ancient Stoic can be rendered in the formulas of the eighteenth-century religion of nature without unfaithfulness to the original. The opening recalls Pope's *Universal Prayer*:

O under various sacred names ador'd!
Divinity supreme! all potent lord!
Author of Nature!

This deity is described as

So blending good with evil, fair with foul,
As hence to model one harmonious whole

Man's "proper task" is

to sing
Of Nature's laws, and Nature's mighty king

"This hymn," says a footnote, "was translated at the request of a very learned and ingenious friend of mine, who was pleased to find such just sentiments of the deity in a heathen, and so much poetry in a philosopher."

Three short original pieces pay tribute to the retirement convention, but since they were written for Lord Westmorland's "hermitage" they probably tell us little about the poet's real feeling. One of them, *Father Francis's Prayer*, praises the hermit's life in language which faintly resembles Middle English. West's *Inscription* for his own summerhouse rejoices in being neither too close to London nor too far away:

And when too much repose brings on the spleen,
Or the gay city's idle pleasures cloy,
Swift as my changing wish, I change the scene,
And now the country, now the town enjoy

Slightly stronger evidence of his preromanticism is provided by his two Spenserian imitations, *On the Abuse of Travelling* and *Education*. West, however, uses the *Faerie Queene* stanza in these poems as sugar-coating for a heavy dose of didacticism rather than because of any romantic admiration for Spenser. *On the Abuse of Traveling* is highly moral but not at all religious. Young English travelers are urged to remember that Rome has surrendered man's most precious possession—liberty

Ye who enjoy that freedom she has lost,
That great prerogative of human kind,
Close to your hearts the precious jewel bind,
And learn the rich possession to maintain,
Learn virtue, justice, constancy of mind,
Not to be mov'd by fear or pleasure's train,
Be these your arts, ye brave, these only are humane

The ideals upheld, then, are those of a Whiggish Stoicism

Education is a trifle more rewarding. Almost at the outset of the poem John Locke appears as a "palmer sage" who had been

by celestial Wisdom led
Through all th' apartments of th' immortal mind,
He view'd the secret stores, and mark'd the sted
To judgment, wit, and memory assign'd,
And how sensation and reflection join'd
To fill with images her darksome grotte,
Where, variously disjointed or combin'd,
As reason, fancy, or opinion wrought,
Their various masks they play'd, and fed her pensive thought

In search of truth and virtue he had ranged through all the sciences and all the philosophies,

But all unable there to satisfy
His curious soul, he turn'd him to explore
The sacred writ of Faith to learn, believe, adore

This hint of religion, however, is left dangling while the author uses his clumsy allegory to attack the vices of the age

Contempt of order, manners profligate,
The symptoms of a foul, diseased, and bloated state

The remedy, says Britannia in a concluding address to the "noble, opulent, and great," is an education which will combine classical culture

with whatever else of modern date
Maturer judgment, search more accurate,
Discover'd have of Nature, Man, and God

She adds that her sons, in their progress through learning to wisdom, will be

Conducted by Religion's sacred rays,
Whose soul-invigorating influence
Shall purge their minds from all impure allays
Of sordid selfishness and brutal sense,
And swell th' ennobled heart with bless'd benevolence

But nothing in the poems of this prominent defender of the faith indicates that religion means more than a rather softly stoical "virtue." Alluding to West, Dr Johnson says that "Crashaw is now not the only maker of verses to whom may be given the two venerable names of Poet and Saint." He might have observed that West's saintliness resulted in a very different sort of poetic expression from Crashaw's.

The author of the somewhat unaccountably famous song beginning "Dear Tom, this brown jug that now foams with mild ale" is the Reverend Francis Fawkes (1720-1777), Cambridge M.A. and country parson. He wrote a good many humorous trifles of this kind but was chiefly esteemed by his contemporaries as an excellent translator of Greek and Latin poetry.

An unusual type of antiquarian interest appears in his modernizations of Gavin Douglas's *Description of May* and *Description of Winter*. The preface to the former declares that "Chaucer and Douglas may be look'd upon as the two bright stars that illumin'd England and Scotland, after a dark interval of dulness, a long night of ignorance and superstition, and foretold the return of day, and the revival of learning." Fawkes transforms the originals into fairly effective eighteenth-century descriptive poems.

His fondness for external nature is evidenced by several other poems. *Bramham Park*, a tame loco-descriptive piece showing some interest in the "artful wildness" kind of landscape gardening, has nothing for us. But in *A Parody on a Passage in Milton's Paradise Lost, Book IV*, he responds to Milton's "Sweet is the breath of rosy morn," and so forth, by insisting that not all the sweets of nature

Can any joy suggest,
But to the temper'd breast,
Where virtue's animating ray
Illumines every golden day,
Beams on the mind, and makes all nature gay

Elsewhere, borrowing a device from Thomson, he leads us from the promise of spring to the thought of that *eternal* spring in which the good man will "reap the golden fruit of what his autumn sow'd."³

³ *An Autumnal Ode*

Though imprudent in money matters and a little too convivial, Fawkes was a good-natured, friendly soul of whom no very dark faults are reported. His religion, such as it is, frequently appears in his less trivial poems. He plainly prizes the name of Christian, but the sum total of his theology seems to be that virtuous conduct in this life will give us heaven in the next.⁴ His sensibility leads him to embroider and prettify his utilitarianism, but no one could say of him, as he says of his late patron, Archbishop Herring

But when religious truths his bosom warm'd,
Faith, hope, repentance, and eternal love,
With such pathetic energy he charm'd,
He rais'd our souls to Paradise above.⁵

The sentimental quality of Fawkes's Christianity is best observed in his cheerfully tender funeral elegies, which are written with about the same purity of motive as Namby-Pamby Philips's birthday odes to children of quality. He can use Job's "Man cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down" in order to reach the conclusion

As some sweet rose-bud, that has just begun
To ope its damask beauties in the sun,
Cropt by a virgin's hand, remains confest
A sweeter rosebud in her balmy breast
Thus the fair youth, when Heav'n requir'd his breath,
Sunk, sweetly smiling, in the arms of death.⁶

In the same vein, he addresses a perhaps imaginary *Young Gentleman, Who Died for Love*

Bless'd youth! whose bosom nature form'd to glow
With purest flame the heart of man can know,
Go where bright angels heavenly raptures prove,
And melt in visions of seraphic love

This resembles Elizabeth Rowe's heaven, but it lacks the starch provided by her firmer Protestantism.

In 1745 or a bit earlier, Lord Chief Justice Singleton of the Irish bench took benignant notice of two poems by a bricklayer's apprentice named Henry Jones (1721-1770).⁷ As an appropriate reward, the poet was given

⁴ The idea appears in *An Autumnal Ode, On the Death of the Earl of Uxbridge, To the Countess of Uxbridge, and To Dr Thomas Herring*

⁵ *Aurelius An Elegy*

⁶ *On the Death of a Young Gentleman*

⁷ His work remains uncollected. I have used *Poems on Several Occasions* (1749) and almost all of the nondramatic poems published separately after that date.

employment in repairing the Dublin parliament house. But Jones's ambitions soared above bricks and mortar. He greeted Chesterfield, the new lord lieutenant, with a poetical tribute so gratifying that his lordship, after leaving his Irish post, encouraged him to come to London. In 1749, with the help of Stanhope and his friends, Jones published *Poems on Several Occasions*. The marked success of his tragedy, *The Earl of Essex*, was also his downfall, for it completely turned his head. Before long he had become a sort of Richard Savage—vain, dissipated, sponging, shunned by his old patrons, but never ceasing to exude lofty sentiments. For all his flashy rhetoric, the poetical bricklayer is a very competent maker of verses, far superior to Stephen Duck the poetical thresher or John Bancks the poetical weaver.⁸ He ranks with the better second-rate sentimental poets of the period.

Most of the *Poems on Several Occasions* were written in Ireland while Jones was struggling to ingratiate himself with the rich and powerful. Though there is no reason to suppose him a cold-blooded hypocrite, we must not accept at quite their face value such pious utterances as

What Taste of Happiness we find below,
Must from Religion's sacred Fountain flow.⁹

To the influential Dean Delany he inscribes the story of a youth of excellent parts—Jones himself?—who, led astray by bad associates, becomes a libertine and a witty mocker of sacred things. But by accident he hears Delany preach and is straightway converted:

This straying Lamb, whom Error long misled,
Now, sacred Shepherd, in thy Fold is fed,
Restor'd to taste, with thy well-tended few,
The living Fountain and the fragrant Dew.¹⁰

Another overstrained compliment is *On a Picture of Our Saviour's Examination before Caiaphas, sent to his Grace Dr George Stone, Lord Primate of Ireland*. In the painting, Caiaphas regards Jesus with an expression of fear. How different from the modern high priest!

No dread like this disturbs our Pontiff's Soul,
No conscious Fears his rising Joys controul,
Wrapt in the Theme divine, his Bosom swells,
And on the sacred Scene, delighted, dwells
What pure Emotions his warm Soul expand,
When Jesus stretches his appealing Hand!

⁸ For Duck and Bancks, see I, 373–76 and 273–78, respectively.

⁹ *On the vain Pursuits and imperfect Enjoyments of Human Life*.

¹⁰ *Verses inscrib'd to the Rev. Dr. Delany*.

It is good to know that Archbishop Stone, unlike Delany, did *not* subscribe for the volume

Jones wonders why the "Men of Song" have joined the "Men of Power" and the "Men of Pleasure" in an alliance against religion. They are, he thinks, corrupted by Shaftesbury's "seducing lore." He sees a chance to catch attention by being deliberately unfashionable

An odd Experiment for once be try'd,
Inlist a Poet on Religion's Side ¹¹

With premeditated rapture, then, he apostrophizes Charity

Celestial Guest,
Inflame each Breast
With social Ardours, mutual Love,
Still more refin'd
Make Humankind,
Till each be like the Bless'd above ¹²

An apparently warm response to Newtonianism is expressed in Jones's first published work, *Philosophy, a Poem, address'd to the Ladies who attended Mr Booth's Lectures in London* (1746) ¹³

Here, God-like Newton's all-capacious Mind,
The Glory, and the Guide of Humankind,
Shows wedded Worlds far distant Worlds embrace
With mutual Bands, yet keep their destin'd Space,
Roll endless Measures through th' ethereal Plain,
Link'd by the social, strong, attractive Chain,
Whose latent Springs exert all Nature's Force,
Enwrap the Poles, and point the Stars their Course
Mysterious Energy! stupendous Theme!
Immediate Mover of this boundless Frame!
Who can thy Essence, or thy Pow'r explain?
The Sons of Wisdom seek thy Source in vain
Thy self invisible, yet seen thy Laws,
This glorious Fabrick thy Effect, and God the Cause

The whole passage is perfectly representative of the Newtonian tradition, but the view of gravitation as a "social" force is particularly noteworthy

¹¹ *To the Reverend Dr Mann, occasioned by the Author's asking him for a Subject to write on and his saying he could think of none*

¹² *On the Lying in Hospital in Dublin*

¹³ The lectures were illustrated by experiments concerned with air, magnetism, electricity, and an orrery

Unfortunately the poem ends with compliments to the ladies—one of whom was Mrs Delany—on their interest in such profundities

The enthusiasm for science here displayed is balanced by *An Essay on the Weakness of Human Knowledge* With much indebtedness to Pope he shows the limitations of reason

Our Judgments vary, as our Passions bend,
Caprice the Motive, and Self-love the End

From hence the fierce Polemick Hydra came,
From hence this System, and that Sect took Name
Hence Epicurus made his Atoms dance,
And hence, Descartes, thy Physical Romance
From hence Religion felt the wild Extremes,
The Bigot's Fury, and Enthusiast's Dreams

The wise man will observe God's hand in all His works, but

Beyond this Limit Man may spare his Pains,
Nor waste the Vigour of his lab'ring Brains,
In quest of Truths remote from human sight
Which 'scape our Ken, and mock'd the Stagyrite

Probably Jones does not realize that this sceptical positivism implies a denial of all supernatural religion

In his view of external nature, Jones is a compromiser *Tempe, a Poem, inscrib'd to Solitude* was, one imagines, originally written to gratify the owner of some landscaped estate Hence such laboriously balanced lines as

Here Art adorns the smiling Groves and Fields,
She rules o'er Nature, and to Nature yields
With mutual Scepter and successive Sway,
By Turns they govern, and by Turns obey

This system of checks and balances is related to cosmic law

Bright Order first, and Truth coeval rose,
To Error still, and Discord, endless Foes,
Eternal Harmony through Nature sounds,
Gives Brooks their Borders, and gives Worlds their Bounds
Establish'd Rectitude in all appears,
Instinct the Ant, and Concord moves the Spheres

Here we are reminded of Shaftesbury, whom Jones, elsewhere in the same volume, has termed a corrupting influence

Few of the poems separately published after the appearance of the 1749

volume add anything to our understanding of Jones's religion. Despite the progressive deterioration of his character, however, he never ceased to write as the champion of liberty, nature, virtue, benevolence, harmony, and so on. Definitely Christian notes are sounded less often, but he remains classifiable as a hazy latitudinarian rather than as a deist.

To the rebuttals of Edward Young which have already been noted may be added *The Relief, or, Day Thoughts: A Poem Occasioned by The Complaint, or Night Thoughts* (1754)

Why all this solemn apparatus? why?
Why all this din about a worm's concerns?

Jones's answer is an attempt to associate Young's melancholy with monkish superstition, which has obscured the real delightfulness of things. What looks like evil is merely a necessary element of the cosmic chiaroscuro.

Behold all nature in one gen'rous strife,
The war of amity, and discord sweet,
The strife of strong benevolence, behold,
The universal agents all at work,
From different quarters, with contending Pow'rs,
In hostile harmony, to propagate
One glorious and eternal good to man.

In the light of such optimism, the fear of hell and the whole paraphernalia of graveyardism are to be dismissed as "bigot blasphemy"

Let fancy drive these goblins from her sight,
Let mirth, let joy, let transport fill their place,

Distinguish'd man! rejoice, how bless'd thy lot,
Whilst reason is thy guide! look up, look up,
O see where hope stands pointing to the sky

Turn thy eyes thither, thither lift thy heart
Thy gracious God awaits thee there, to him
Thou shalt return, in season due, to taste
Immortal transports! thy beginning, end,
Thy center, father, saviour, and thy friend

Jones's confidence in eternal bliss rests upon his complete lack of anything like Young's awareness of human sinfulness. God has created

A race of creatures capable of joy,
Enrich'd with thought, and warm'd with fierce desire,
With delicate sensations cover'd o'er,

And nice perception, prompt to gratify
 Th' implanted impulse, and the vig'rous call
 When nature makes her strong, her just demand,
 When passion rises at the loud alarm,
 Led up by reason to the genial task,
 By reason guided to the wise retreat,
 Can justice punish what herself decrees,
 And make obedience to her laws a crime?

Since nature is the only God we can know, God will surely not condemn us for obeying any of our natural impulses. Jones must often have found this a convenient doctrine.

The conception of human life as a balanced composition of light and shade is given an interesting sociological twist in the loco-descriptive poem, *Clifton* (1767). As he looks down at Bristol from the hill, the mixture of mansions and hovels reminds him of the social differences, ambitions, and discontents of their inmates:

The moral here and natural world we see,
 In wise gradation, and in just degree
 Where all constructed for one system's sake,
 A happy, heterogeneous prospect make
 Where reason's scale from class to class can fall,
 And measure equal bounty dealt to all

Having consoled the poor with the reflection that happiness arises "not from what we have, but what we feel," Jones, after dwelling briefly upon St Mary Redcliffe, "fairest of the Gothic kind," passes on with even greater satisfaction to

the proud *Exchange*—
 Important dome, that traffic's eye consoles,
 That grasps with wide embrace th' extended poles,
 Thou vital ventricle, whence commerce flows,
 Where strength, and wealth, and warmest friendship glows

And so, as if to fill out a picture of the complete sentimentalist, the clever but hollow-souled rascal leaves us with this tribute to his favorite deity:

Hail, commerce, hail! thou gate of ev'ry good,
 Who swells triumphant, like thy trading flood,
 Thy precious stores in countless value rise,
 They make us virtuous, and they make us wise,

Thy means still equal to the glorious end,
 Make life a comfort, and make man a friend,

Bring home each cordial to the heart and head,
 By goodness guided, and by wisdom led,
 The soul to soften, and enlarge the mind,
 Make man to man in social office kind,
 Mix sweet compassion with the toils of gain,
 And all the wants of sinking life sustain

To do full justice to the comedy, or tragedy, of the career of the Reverend William Dodd (1729-1777) would require many pages. Dr. Harder has good grounds for using him as an example of sentimentalism in full bloom.¹⁴ His early experience in various curacies and lectureships after leaving Cambridge are of no importance to us. In these years he was something of a Hutchinsonian.¹⁵ Later, with an emulous eye on Whitefield, he became an Evangelical and addressed himself to high society, but he abandoned the doctrine of free grace when he found it repugnant to fashionable congregations.

His appointment to the chaplaincy of Magdalen House in 1758 was a great piece of luck, since he was perfectly fitted for the duty of wringing tears from repentant harlots and from gentry who came as spectators. What he had to offer appears in these lines to the Duchess of Northumberland:

Illustrious branch of Seymour's stately tree,
 These are the works, whose captivating form
 Soft-ey'd compassion waits to show to thee,
 Waits with her own pure flame thy soul to warm
 Waits to raise the generous sigh,
 To steal a tear from thy bright eye,
 Drops of melting charity!
 Sighs which please us while they pain,
 Tears which speak the heart humane,
 Tokens sure of virtue's reign!

And those will rise, and these will flow,
 When thou with lenient looks shall view,
 The decent throng, in modest guise array'd,

¹⁴ J. H. Harder, *Observations on Some Tendencies of Sentiment and Ethics Chiefly in Minor Poetry and Essay in the Eighteenth Century until the Execution of Dr. W. Dodd in 1777* pp. 262-63 and 276-79.

¹⁵ In such works as *Moses's Principia* (1724) John Hutchinson (1674-1737) united a lively interest in science with a rigid religious fundamentalism. By means of fantastic etymologies and systems of symbolism, he undertook to show that the Hebrew Bible contained all knowledge, human and divine. Conversely, he proved the historicity of the Flood from the existence of fossil sea shells on the tops of mountains.

With humbled heart, and humbled eye,
The decent throng, so lately lost and dead,
Wrapt in foul woe, and cloath'd with infamy¹⁶

Dodd's grossly sentimentalized Evangelicalism was for a time highly successful. He obtained a living and a prebendal stall, he edited the *Christian Magazine*, his sermons and other edifying works sold almost as well as his *Beauties of Shakespeare*, he tutored Philip Stanhope (the godson), he became a royal chaplain, he swaggered about town as "the macaroni parson." But his debts rose as his popularity sank, and he grew seedy and desperate. Through his wife, he angled for the rich living of St. George's, Hanover Square, in a way which the censorious described as bribery. At last, as every reader of Boswell knows, he forged Chesterfield's name to a bond for £4,200. Dr. Johnson was not the only prominent person who pleaded for him, but all in vain. Still full of sensibility, he went to the gallows.

In 1767, ten years before this happy event, Dodd published, as "an humble but affectionate monument" to the memory of his parents, a volume of very bad poems. He himself speaks of them with somewhat unconvincing deprecation. "Most of the poems in this volume," says the Advertisement, "are juvenile performances, the rest, the mere amusement of vacant moments, never suffered to intrude upon more important hours, or to interrupt better and more useful occupations."

In his verses as in his life, Dodd is so obviously a Christian that one almost wishes he were something else. When a young lady accuses him of flattering her, he concludes an unctuous explanation with the lines

When therefore, sweet maid, I bestow the due praise
On your person and mind, in sincere but rude lays,
To virtue exalted I rouse by my strain,
Not flatter with falsehood, or teach to be vain
You're handsome—you're sensible—humane and good
But whose is the merit?—oh, give it to God!¹⁷

Though he rather often endeavors to be sprightly, he has no real humor. The sensibility of *Tristram Shandy* must have appealed to him, but its racy wit shocks his prudery.

Yes, they will laugh,—but whom, O S[tern]e, enquire?
The wretched sons of vice and foul desire

¹⁶ *An Ode Occasioned by Lady Northumberland's Being Prevented by Illness from Coming to the Chapel of the Magdalen-House*. See the very similar *Verses, Occasioned by Seeing the Countess of Hertford, in Tears at the Magdalen House*.

¹⁷ *A Second Apology To Miss I——*

To these your page immoral may be dear,
But virtue o'er it sheds the conscious tear

Is it for this the holy hand was laid,
Thrice awful consecration, on your head?

More conscious of his sacred calling, Dodd aims to soften the heart with tearful smiles and happy tears. *The Mother*, one of a series of "Moral Pastorals," depicts a poor, industrious, pious, ideally virtuous woman. An old man named Ægon and a youth named Argol see her nursing the latest of her numerous babies

The good old man, enchanted with delight,
Cry'd, "Argol, there,—there, Argol, is a sight!
Blest mother! may thy labours prosperous prove,
May all thy children well repay thy love!"
More he'd have said, but lo! a tear would start,
And all his soul rose throbbing in his heart,
The mother, pleas'd, beheld his burden'd eye,
And thank'd him with a tear of social joy

Such tears abound in these poems, but real sorrow is entirely absent. The title of *Happiness Everywhere* is symptomatic. He loves to beam at such examples of perfect goodness as are found in the home of his friends the Godins, where Fidelity and Tenderness

in forms of doves reside
Happy doves, that all the day,
Live and love, and coo and play

At the door stands Hospitality,

While benevolence, the grace,
Soft of heart, and sweet of face,
To the master will attend,

She, with all her social train,
Pity, with her melting eye,
Active worth, humanity,
Sincerity, rare seen abroad,
And generosity, the god¹⁸

¹⁸ *The Man of Southgate* (He is thinking of "the Man of Ross.")

All these virtues are elsewhere summed up in the personification Good Nature, whose begetting is Miltonically narrated

Thou wast born
Of Tenderness, the woodland fair, whom erst
Strong Sense, thy sire robust, in greenwood shade

He saw, he lov'd, and to his fond embrace
Woo'd her, and won¹⁹

It is the will of this "sweet nymph" that man

Shall labour to diffuse the heart-felt bliss
Of sweet benevolence²⁰

The spectacle of an aged beggar proves the truth of immortality, for his sufferings here demand a recompense hereafter. But the beggar is even more important as a means of enjoying the pleasure of charity. Lifting his eyes to heaven, Dodd prays

Take not, never from me take—
The heart which loves to feel and ake,
Ake at sorrow's sore distress,
Feel, as quick to aid and bless!

Never from my soul remove
The luxury of Christian love!²¹

The parallel with Wordsworth's *Old Cumberland Beggar* is suggestive. To Dodd, indeed, altruism becomes a delicious form of selfishness

How much one good, well-natur'd deed
Exhilarates the mind!
Self-love should prompt each human heart
To study to be kind!²²

A sprinkling of other preromantic traits combines with Dodd's benevolism. He remembers the white cliffs of Margate,

Beneath whose towering height so oft I walk'd
On the smooth level sand, while all my soul
Was rapt into astonishment and praise
At thy tremendous works, Maker omnipotent!²³

¹⁹ *An Hymn to Good-Nature*

²⁰ *Ibid*

²¹ *On Seeing an Old Man, Begging Opposite an Inn at Hounslow*

²² *Sacred to Humanity*

²³ *An Hymn to Good-Nature*

A Negro prince sojourning in England and his sweetheart left behind in Africa exchange affecting epistles in the *Eloisa to Abelard* style²⁴ Princess Zara addresses the Deity

O pow'r supreme! whoe'er thou art,
Thy shrine the sky, the sea, the earth, or heart

Some interest in Spenser is suggested by a *Sonnet Occasioned by Hearing a Young Lady Sing Spenser's Amoretti, etc, Set to Music by Dr Greene* The compiler of a *Beauties of Shakespeare* (1752) which was frequently reissued up to 1880, Dodd writes a poem *On Seeing a Single Swan on the Banks of the Avon* The bird symbolizes Shakespeare, child of Nature and Fancy

In general, however, Dodd sticks tenaciously to the central tenets of benevolism

Noble spirits, most partaking
Of the pure aethereal flame,
Find the fullest bliss in making
All around enjoy the same
O how pleasing to dispense
Rays of rich benevolence!
O how godlike to impart
All the generous feeling heart!
And with comforts to o'erflow
All the weeping wants of woe!²⁵

In this faith lies assurance of salvation With perfect confidence Dodd looks forward to the time

When the Great Master²⁶ summons me to leave
Terrestrial peace and harmony, for peace
And harmony perennial, in the realms
Of bliss unutterable

So shall I rest me on the down of peace,
So shall my weeping friends, when the last sigh

²⁴ *The African Prince, When in England, MDCCXLIX To Zara at His Father's Court and Zara at the Court of Annamaboe, to the African Prince, when in England*

²⁵ *An Ode Occasioned by Lady N[orthumberland]'s Being Prevented by Illness from Coming to the Chapel of the Magdalen-House*

²⁶ The connotations of the term are not inevitably masonic, but Dodd was an enthusiastic Freemason

Declares departed life, smiting their breasts
 Say—"Lov'd he liv'd, and loving —peace to his shade,
 Embalm him, Memory, and receive him, Heaven!"²⁷

On July 27, 1777, the author of these affecting lines was hanged

Partly for himself, but much more for his contacts with Gray, Walpole, and other memorable persons, William Mason (1724-1797) is a familiar figure to students of the Age of Johnson. His transitional position in the literary history of the eighteenth century has been so fully described by Professor Draper²⁸ that nothing need here be said concerning his mild but rather persistent preromanticism.

As a Cambridge student, Mason represented a well-defined type: he was a sentimental deist and a Whig with liberal and almost radical notions of political reform. When he took orders in 1754 his sentimental deism was easily transmuted into sentimental Christianity. His political liberalism was maintained, a little less boyishly but still warmly enough to hinder his preferment, until at last the French Revolution made him an alarmed conservative. He paraphrases "part of the fourteenth chapter of Isaiah" so freely that it becomes a very rumpled pseudo-Pindaric ode *On the Fate of Tyranny*. As late as 1788 another ode celebrates the anniversary of the ascent of William III to the throne: "Whence bigot Zeal and lawless Power had fled" and closes with an attack on the slave trade. Mason bids Truth convince the English that

'tis Heaven's benign decree
 That all, of Christian liberty
 The peace-inspiring gale should breathe
 May then that nation hope to claim
 The glory of the Christian name,
 That loads fraternal tribes with bondage worse than death?²⁹

"Christian liberty" and Roman Catholicism are, of course, mutually exclusive terms. In *The English Garden*, Mason explains that the landscape gardener's art is not of classical origin:

Rome knew it not
 When Rome was free: ah! hope not then to find
 In slavish superstitious Rome the fair
 Remains

²⁷ *An Hymn to Good-Nature*

²⁸ J. W. Draper, *William Mason: a Study in Eighteenth-Century Culture*

²⁹ *Ode XI*

The same poem shows how the Protestant connoisseur of the picturesque regards monastic ruins

And there are scenes, where, tho' she [Art] whilom trod,
Led by the worst of guides, fell Tyranny,
And ruthless Superstition, we now trace
Her footsteps with delight, and pleas'd revere
What once had rous'd our hatred

Although Mason entered the priesthood from coolly practical motives, he became a conscientious and useful clergyman. It is reported that he was a good preacher and that he devoted one-third of his income to charity. Consecrating an aesthetic hobby, he made a substantial contribution to Church music.⁸⁰ He was less skilled in painting than in music, but "In 1784, he painted the Holy Family, and, about the same time, he designed an 'altarpiece' for the Chapel Royal."⁸¹

Sixteen sermons and two theological essays are printed in Volume IV of his *Works*. In the pulpit he favored such soothing themes as *The Self-satisfaction which results from the practise of Moral Duties*, *Christian Benevolence*, *Christian Compassion*, and *God, the Universal and Equal Father of all Mankind*. He also preached against the slave trade, Deism, and Methodism. His *Methodism displayed, and Enthusiasm detected* went through five editions.

In Mason's poems, however, there is little hard thinking or deep feeling on religious matters. Draper suggests that "although a certain pious tone and an unmistakable straining after philosophic depth appear in some of his maturer works, these are probably to be imputed to literary convention as much as to the influence of his religious vocation."⁸² But although Mason was assuredly not a boldly original thinker, he seems to believe in the conventions which dominate his work. If his elegies and epitaphs are too self-conscious in their mournful tenderness, several of them rest upon a solid foundation of Christian hope. The epitaph *On Mrs. Mason* closes with lines which represent the best in his religion.

Speak, dead Maria! breathe a strain divine
Ev'n from the grave thou shalt have power to charm
Bid them be chaste, be innocent, like thee,
Bid them in duty's sphere as meekly move,
And if so fair, from vanity as free,

⁸⁰ Draper, *William Mason*, pp. 284ff.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 305.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 56.

As firm in friendship, and as fond in love
 Tell them, tho' 'tis an awful thing to die,
 ('Twas ev'n to thee), yet the dread path once trod,
 Heav'n lifts its everlasting portals high,
 And bids "the pure in heart behold their God"

But this quality is rare in Mason's work. His four hymns and fourteen psalm-paraphrases are merely pious scale passages. He is more at home in apostrophizing such abstractions as *Memory* and *Independency*. His most formidable poem, *The English Garden*, excludes even the religion of "Nature and Nature's God." The obligatory Contemplation is lugged in, but Nature, which is frequently mentioned in a tone of vague piety, seems merely to personify good taste in landscape gardening. Mason believes in a broad, cheerful, active, unfanatical faith.

Nor think the Muse, whose sober voice ye hear,
 Contracts with bigot frown her sullen brow,
 Casts round religion's orb the mists of fear,
 Or shades with horrors, what with smiles should glow
 No, she would warm you with seraphic fire,
 Heirs as ye are of Heav'n's eternal day,
 Would bid you boldly to that Heav'n aspire,
 Not sink and slumber in your cells of clay³³

Of this religion Mason is a loyal defender. Against bigots he is the broadest of latitudinarians, but in the face of rank unbelief he speaks the language of worried orthodoxy. For him the great enemy is what would now be described by obscurantists as "science and philosophy, falsely so called." Wistfully he looks back to the times when man, with humble wisdom, observed the hand of God in nature,

Before vain science led his taste astray,
 When conscience was his law, and God his guide³⁴

He assures the sceptic that the hope of immortality implanted by God in the "free soul" of man can never be destroyed by "vain philosophy."³⁵ In the *Hymn for York Cathedral* indifference to the Sabbath is blamed upon "vain deceit, and false philosophy."

Religio Clerici, written almost at the close of his life and published posthumously in 1810, was intended to be a more formidable essay in polemics, but it is the work of a querulous old man who has been scared by the French

³³ *Elegy IV*³⁴ *Elegy II*³⁵ *Elegy IV*

Revolution The imitation of Dryden hardly goes deeper than the title Though he scolds impotently at Papists, Deists, Unitarians, and Jacobins, the faith which he champions is merely a sort of cosmic amiability

In a portrait by Joshua Reynolds, James Beattie (1735-1803)⁸⁶ appears with his *Essay on Truth* under his arm The angel of Truth herself hovers approvingly in the background She holds a pair of balances in one hand, while with the other she thrusts away Folly, Scepticism, and Prejudice Here is the great and good Dr Beattie as he lived in the minds of Dr Johnson and Elizabeth Montagu, of Lyttelton and Mason and Cowper

By the middle of the eighteenth century the laitudinarian party known as the "Moderates" dominated the Kirk of Scotland with that immoderation which often characterizes officially established liberalism Those orthodox Calvinists who refused to accept the religion of reason, nature, and universal benevolence could either withdraw into the "Secession Kirk" or remain as members of an impotent "Evangelical" group But even such breadth as the Moderates' had its limits The radical scepticism of Hume shocked them—shocked them all the more because Hume was well known to such leading Moderates as Robertson, Blair, and Beattie Hence some of the more intellectual Moderates became apologetic philosophers, forming what is called the Common Sense School

Briefly, they were attempting to answer Hume by means of an objective, nonindividualistic pragmatism They argued that truth consists of a body of propositions self-evident to rational beings, with the implication that these propositions *must* be self-evident because they are necessary to intellectual and spiritual life Thomas Reid, the only reputable philosopher of the group, upheld the validity of intuitive or immediate belief in an external world James Oswald, in his *Appeal to Common Sense*, applied the school's doctrine to religion, arguing that the existence of God is axiomatic This kind of thinking was closely akin to the empirical apologetics which had become fashionable south of the border Lyttelton and Gilbert West are essentially "Common Sense" writers, and Soame Jenyns, on the score

⁸⁶ The son of a prosperous Scotch farmer After graduating from Marischal College, Aberdeen, he became a schoolmaster and parish clerk, but with Lord Monboddo's encouragement he aimed at higher things and by 1760 had become Professor of Philosophy in Marischal College In 1770 his *Essay on Truth*, followed by a triumphal visit to London, established his reputation as philosopher and theologian *Evidences of the Christian Religion* (1786) was based on his classroom lectures His wife's insanity and the death of two sons in their young manhood broke his mind, and he died after three years of melancholia

of his *View of the Internal Evidence of the Christian Religion*, is generally accounted a member of the school

Hence in London no less than in Edinburgh, Beattie's *Essay* was hailed by friends of religion and virtue as a crushing refutation of Hume. The book popularizes, in language of shallow clarity, the philosophy of Reid, but is quite without Reid's desire to deal honestly with a difficult problem. The idea that "whatever people generally believe must be therefore true" is supported chiefly by scolding at the moral consequences of infidelity.

Not a prolific poet, Beattie apparently preferred to defend the Moderate faith in prose. His verse displays the fashionable habit, which may be regarded as a clear symptom of insensitivity to spiritual values, of writing in a quasi-religious vein about personified abstractions. Thus he transfers the work of creation from God to

Peace, heaven-descended maid! whose powerful voice
From ancient darkness call'd the morn,
Of jarring elements compos'd the noise,
When Chaos from his old dominion torn,
With all his bellowing throng,
Far, far was hurl'd the void abyss along⁸⁷

The Judgment of Paris uses innumerable personifications to establish the hackneyed thesis that virtue alone gives happiness.

A favorite idea is that religion banishes gloomy thoughts about the wretchedness of mortal life:

Through Earth's throng'd visions while we toss forlorn,
'Tis tumult all, and rage, and restless strife,
But these shall vanish like the dreams of morn,
When Death awakes us to immortal life⁸⁸

It is of course to *The Minstrel* that this writer owes his modest but secure place in the annals of the Romantic Movement. Beattie's "design," as he says in his Preface, "was, to trace the progress of a poetical genius, born in a rude age, from the first dawning of fancy and reason, till that period at which he may be supposed capable of appearing in the world as a Minstrel." The hero Edwin is the son of a humble shepherd, but the bleak hills of Scotland nourish his genius:

Here peaceful are the vales, and pure the skies,
And freedom fires the soul, and sparkles in the eyes

⁸⁷ *Ode to Peace*. See also *Ode to Hope*.

⁸⁸ *Elegy*. See also *The Hermit*.

But the boy has also received the more inspiring counsel

Forgive thy foes, and love thy parents dear,
And friends, and native land, nor those alone,
All human weal and woe learn thou to make thine own

Edwin is ignorant of great literature, but his imagination has been aroused, his heart softened, his mind prepared for poetry by traditional tales and ballads. Sometimes he is shocked by stories of cruelty and injustice, but he will learn to subdue rebellious questionings

One part, one little part, we dimly scan
Thro' the dark medium of life's feverish dream,
Yet dare arraign life's whole stupendous plan,
If but that little part incongruous seem

O then renounce that impious self-esteem,
That aims to trace the secrets of the skies
For thou art but of dust, be humble, and be wise

Thus Heaven enlarg'd his soul in riper years,
For Nature gave him strength and fire, to soar
On Fancy's wing above this vale of tears,
Where dark cold-hearted sceptics, creeping, pore
Through microscope of metaphysic lore
And much they grope for truth, but never hit

One approaches that truth which is above fact not through analytical reason, but through imagination inspired and strengthened by nature. Here the foretoking of Wordsworth's *Prelude* is especially significant.

In Book II Edwin, now an adolescent, overhears a hermit rejoicing in his escape from levity, lust, ambition, treachery, and other ills of sophisticated society. The uncorrupted youth, who has known nothing but natural beauty and goodness, is distressed by this revelation of evil. Later he seeks out the hermit and demands an explanation. The sage, paraphrasing Gray, first advises "Be ignorance thy choice, where knowledge leads to woe." He adds, however, that human error is not too bitterly to be lamented, since it is merely a corollary of human freedom.

For know, to man, as candidate for heaven,
The voice of the Eternal said, Be free
And this divine prerogative to thee
Does virtue, happiness, and Heaven convey,

For virtue is the child of liberty,
 And happiness of virtue, nor can they
 Be free to keep the path, who are not free to stray

In a sense, the possibility of virtue demands the possibility of vice

The hermit then instructs Edwin in the history of the world—a recital of man's inhumanity to man. If these are facts, says the disillusioned youth, he will choose poetry

Then hail sweet Fancy's ray! and hail the dream
 That weans the weary soul from guilt and woe!
 Careless what others of my choice may deem,
 I long, where Love and Fancy lead, to go
 And meditate on Heaven, enough of Earth I know

But the hermit answers that fancy alone is an inadequate guide

Fancy enervates, while it soothes, the heart,
 And, while it dazzles, wounds the mental sight
 To joy each heightening charm it can impart,
 But wraps the hour of woe in tenfold night

The gifts of nature and imagination must be guided by learning, reason, and judgment. Edwin needs what Beattie, in a long footnote summarizing thirteen stodgy stanzas, calls "The influence of the philosophic spirit, in humanizing the mind, and preparing it for intellectual exertion and delicate pleasure,—in exploring, by the help of geometry, the system of the universe,—in banishing superstition,—in promoting navigation, agriculture, medicine, and moral and political science." Some relation between "the philosophic spirit" and religion is suggested by the lines

And Reason now thro' number, time, and space,
 Darts the keen lustre of her serious eye,
 And learns, from facts compar'd, the laws to trace,
 Whose long progression leads to Deity

"Enraptur'd by the hermit's strain," Edwin devotes himself to the pursuit of knowledge

Fancy now no more
 Wantons on fickle pinion through the skies,
 But, fix'd in aim, and conscious of her power,
 Aloft from cause to cause exults to rise,
 Creation's blended stores arranging as she flies

Poetry always remains his chief love, but his art, thanks to knowledge of Homer and Virgil as well as of science, loses its boyish extravagance and grows chaste, temperate, and clear.

Such is the *Bildungsroman* composed by the author of the *Essay on Truth*. Beattie would doubtless insist that the whole poem implies a foundation of rational, unsuperstitious Christianity. Despite a few pious remarks, however, the supernatural plays no essential part in the shaping of the minstrel's mind.

An obscurer figure than Mason or Beattie, though perhaps not a wholly forgotten one, is John Scott (1730-1783). His father, a Quaker linendraper of London, set up as a maltster in the village of Amwell in Hertfordshire when the boy was ten. John had very little formal schooling, but was introduced to literature by Charles Frogley, a self-educated bricklayer whose daughter Sarah he married in 1767. Scott's verses won him the respect of such sober men of letters as Young, Lyttelton, and Beattie, and from 1770 onward he frequented Mrs. Montagu's salon. He was public spirited in county affairs, especially as regards the care of the poor. A strong liberal, he wrote pro-American pamphlets in answer to Dr. Johnson and hailed Mrs. Macaulay as the personification of the Muse of Freedom.³⁹

Scott's verse, though seldom concerned with supernatural religion, has a soberly moral quality which agrees with what is known of his life. Except for one vigorous outburst of pacifism beginning "I hate that drum's discordant sound,"⁴⁰ it seems Quakerish only in its quietness and simplicity. During most of his adult life, indeed, Scott was only nominally a Quaker, though he returned to the fold as death drew near.⁴¹

This is quite literally a man of "ode, and elegy, and sonnet."⁴² True to his tastes, he expresses admiration for Thomson, Dyer, Shenstone, Gray, Collins, Mason, Beattie, and Langhorne. He thanks Mrs. Montagu for vindicating Shakespeare against Voltaire⁴³ but avers that

From silver Avon's flowery side
Though Shakespeare's numbers sweetly glide,
As sweet, from Morven's desert hills,
My ear the voice of Ossian fills.⁴⁴

³⁹ *Stanzas on Reading Mrs. Macauley's [sic] History of England*

⁴⁰ *Ode XIII*

⁴¹ See the account of his deathbed quoted in Chalmers, XVII, 449-51. The dying poet's self-reproach may be discounted rather heavily, since the Society itself admitted the probity and usefulness of his life. He was merely a backslider from Quaker orthodoxy, not from "religion and virtue."

⁴² Besides many odes and elegies, his poems contain a group of five Petrarchan sonnets dated 1766.

⁴³ *Ode XXII To Criticism*

⁴⁴ *Ode XV The Muse, or, Poetical Enthusiasm*

Although he was one of the first to doubt the authenticity of the Rowley Poems, he regarded Chatterton as a true genius⁴⁵

Something of an exoticist, Scott draws upon Arabia, India, and China for three *Oriental Eclogues* which have less of poetry but more of orientalism than Collins's⁴⁶ *The Mexican Prophecy An Ode*, in which an Aztec demon foretells the conquest of Mexico by the Spaniards, owes much to Gray's *Bard* "The conquest of Mexico," says Scott, "was undertaken from motives of avarice, and accompanied with circumstances of cruelty, but it produced the subversion of a tyrannical government, and the abolition of a detestable religion of horrid rites and human sacrifices" But detestable as this religion is, he finds it rather exciting

When Scott listens to organ music—reprehensible in a Quaker—his sensibility responds with affecting images

To where the orphan'd infant sleeps,
To where the love-lorn damsel weeps,
I pitying seem to stray,
Methinks I watch his cradle near,
Methinks her drooping thoughts I cheer
And wipe her tears away⁴⁷

Once at least he harks back to his own childhood, longing to regain its innocent joys⁴⁸ In keeping with this mood is his praise of a

gen'rous maiden, in whose gentle breast
Dwells simple nature, undisguis'd by art⁴⁹

His primitivism takes a less conventional turn when, *On Viewing the Ruins of an Abbey*, he finds a good word to say for the monks

Though Superstition much we blame,
That bade them thus consume their years,
Their motives still our praise must claim,
Their constancy our thought reveres
And sure their solitary scheme
Must check each passion's wild extreme,
And save them cares, and save them fears

⁴⁵ *Ode XXI Written After a Journey to Bristol*

⁴⁶ The Advertisement refers apologetically to Collins, whom he greatly admires. Some of the notes on Eastern customs and religions are drawn from his friend Sir William Jones, the pioneer orientalist

⁴⁷ *On Hearing Music*

⁴⁸ *Ode III To Childhood*

⁴⁹ *Sonnet II To Delia*

He concludes, however, that such calm would be an inadequate compensation

For Fame or Fortune's sprightly chase,
Whose prize in prospect still we see,
Or Hymen's happy moment bless'd,
With Beauty leaning on thy breast,
Or Childhood prattling at thy knee

But Scott's outstanding trait is his apparently genuine fondness for external nature. As a nature poet he is more a describer and to a less extent a feeler than a thinker or a worshipper. *Amwell*, a rather good poem of the topographical kind, has no religious element. In a few other poems, however, nature inspires pious thoughts or provides a vehicle for them.

Thus in *The Garden*, along with Fancy, Contentment, Love, and Beauty,

Devotion lifts his brow to Heav'n,
With grateful thanks for many a blessing giv'n

Elsewhere the coming of winter suggests the nicely balanced reflection

Enough has Heav'n indulg'd of joy below,
To tempt our tarriance in this lov'd retreat,
Enough has Heav'n ordain'd of useful woe,
To make us languish for a happier seat⁸⁰

In *Written at the Approach of Spring*, a sense of the vanity and pain of life pursues him even into the solitary glade. But the question "Is there no power this darkness to remove?" is answered, "Yes, those there are who know a Saviour's love." They are happy in the natural world, for they can behold it as the work of God.

Blows not a flow'ret in th' enamel'd vale,
Shines not a pebble where the riv'let strays,
Sports not an insect on the spicy gale,
But claims their wonder, and excites their praise.

They feel the bliss that hope and faith supply,
They pass serene th' appointed hours that bring
The day that wafts them to the realms on high,
The day that centres in Eternal Spring

In no other poem by Scott, however, do we see so clearly a fusion of Christian love of nature with Christian love of God.

⁸⁰ *Elegy IV Written at the Approach of Winter*

The Reverend Thomas Moss (d 1808)⁵¹ is less responsive to preromantic literary tendencies than Scott.⁵² Like Dr Dodd, he lays direct siege to the tender heart

Most of the pieces in *Poems on Several Occasions* (Wolverhampton, 1769) were written when he was about twenty, but except for two or three mawkish love poems and a humorous epistle to a friend its contents are extremely edifying. His major theme is "the Joys Compassion can impart" to those who indulge in this luxury. He never shrinks from the pains of sensibility

Let Stoicks with stern Apathy disdain
The Pangs that on Mortality attend,
Be deaf alike to Pleasure, and to Pain,
And smile upon the Sorrows of a Friend

But with Compassion let *my* Bosom move,
Nor for an Enemy with Rancour burn,
And let the Signature of Social Love
Grace me thro' Life, and decorate my Urn⁵³

The possession of this virtue should console "a female friend" for the death of her father

Yes sure my Delia must be doubly blest,
To whom each darling Attribute is giv'n,
Soft Pity is the Inmate of her Breast,
And Pity is the Favourite of Heav'n⁵⁴

The Beggar, his only popular poem, makes the "poor old man" declare

Shou'd I reveal the Source of every Grief,
If soft Humanity e'er touch'd your Breast,
Your Hands wou'd not withhold the kind Relief,
And Tears of Pity cou'd not be repress

Here the sole trace of religion is the passing remark that "Heav'n has brought me to the State you see"

⁵¹ So says *D.N.B.* According to his great-nephew's Preface to the 1827 *Poems upon Several Occasions*, he was "the only son of a gentleman resident in Staffordshire, in which county he was born, about the year 1740. He was never married, and died several years ago." In 1761 he received his B.A. from Emmanuel College, Cambridge. The 1827 title page also credits him with an M.A.—where obtained is not stated. He was perpetual curate of Brierley Hill Chapel, Kingswinford, Staffordshire. Besides his poems he published two sermons: *The Nature and Extent of Christian Love* and *The Importance and Necessity of Christian Moderation*.

⁵² An exception is the blank verse paraphrase, *Ossian's Address to the Sun, from Fingal*.

⁵³ *Compassion, to Lorenzo*. Note the hint of Young's influence in the title. Moss's favorite pattern is the stanza of Gray's *Elegy*.

⁵⁴ *To a Female Friend, occasioned by the Death of her Father*.

Just below pity in Moss's scale of values comes cheerfulness "The Bosom that is cheerful, and at Ease" cooperates with the will of God, for

Look thro' Creation's Circle—and you'll see
That all Things *here* for Pleasure were design'd
And bear the Stamp of the divine Decree,
To banish Sorrow, and to bless Mankind⁸⁵

True, those whose consciences are untroubled

Are mindless oft how outward Deeds appear,
And Cheerfulness is branded for a Sin,

but if they are acquitted by God in the "sacred Court" of the bosom they need not fear the judgment of man⁸⁶

In 1827 B Guy Phillips, Moss's great-nephew, reprinted the 1769 volume with six additional poems. One of these, *The Imperfections of Human Enjoyments*, "was written at a later period of the Author's life, after recovering from a serious illness, and when, as he himself declares, his situation naturally suggested serious ideas." Here relentlessly prosaic platitudes displace the gush of the earlier poems. The poet takes sixty-one pages of blank verse to arrive at the conclusion

Would we lay hold on the immortal palm,
And reign victorious o'er a hostile world,—
Let us be virtuous—and the prize is gain'd

Be compassionate, be cheerful, be virtuous That is the sum of Moss's Christianity

The poems of that prosperous country gentleman, Edward Lovibond (1724-1775),⁸⁷ illustrate the peculiarly foppish, languishing sentimentalism which often afflicts the aristocrat who cultivates the feelings of a bourgeois civilization without being quite willing to relinquish the playful elegance

⁸⁵ *Cheerfulness*

⁸⁶ *To a Married Lady of injur'd Character*. A footnote explains that her husband's groundless jealousy was provoked by malicious gossip, "but their premeditated Designs were soon frustrated by the clearest Proofs of her Innocence, and she again cohabits with her Husband in the most perfect conjugal Harmony."

⁸⁷ A Middlesex man educated at Magdalen College, Oxford. His father, a director of the East India Company, left him enough money to enable him to live in comfortable idleness all his life. Chalmers reports that "he was an admirable scholar, of very amiable manners, and of universal benevolence", but according to *DNB* he got on badly with his wife. He began his literary career in 1754 by contributing five papers to *The World*. His only volume of verse was published posthumously in 1785 under his brother's editorship.

of his own tradition. Though most of his poems are occasional trifles his work exhibits a facile but persistent emotionalism⁶⁸

It is characteristic of him that he should adapt the "chain of being" idea to a gallant compliment. In *To Miss K—P—* he tells the "Cambrian fair" that if one of the plants which she tends had a soul it would bless and love her. Then he rises to a cosmic view:

Yes, in creation's intellectual reign,
Where life, sense, reason, with progressive chain,
Dividing, blending, form th' harmonious whole —
That plant am I, distinguish'd by a soul⁶⁹

The chain of being is given its progressive and harmonious quality by a divine law which is reflected in the human heart, but especially in the heart of generous youth:

Still my soul, for ever young,
Speak thyself divinely sprung!
Wing'd for Heaven, embracing Earth,
Link'd to all, who suffer pain
Pursue the eternal law!—one power above
Connects, pervades the whole—that power divine is love⁷⁰

It is because "Heaven breathes benevolence to all" that our sensitive plant is opposed to blood sports. They blaspheme the doctrine that "Each being's bliss consummates general good." The welfare of the whole chain of being depends upon the happiness of all its members on all its levels.⁷¹

Those who appreciate this truth live in a mood of tremulous sympathy. Lovibond says *To a Young Lady, Fainting at the News of Her Friend's Misfortune* that fainting is too violent a reaction but that tears in such a case are admirable:

Approach no more, such bitter anguish, near
So soft a bosom, flow alone the tear,
That dew of Heaven, O maid! to Heaven allied,
Thy great Redeemer shed for man and died
Good angels mourn creation's glories lost,
And mourning please, resemble him the most,
Flow then thy tear, ordain'd by Heaven's decree,
For bliss to others, sweeter bliss to thee!

⁶⁸ For preromantic traits not directly related to his religious thought see *On Rebuilding Combe-Neville* (medieval history, chivalry), *The Complaint of Cambria* (Celticism, Druids, Ossian), *Verses Written after Passing through Findon* ("Cambrian harp," "Gothic numbers"), *Imitated from Ossian's Poems*

⁶⁹ The poem is based on a passage from Marmontel which he quotes in a headnote

⁷⁰ *Ode to Youth*

⁷¹ *On Rural Sports*

Jesus was a Man of Feeling, like the angels, we should be quick to imitate His tears

The tear of social sympathy, however, has no kinship with the morbid melancholy of the bigot. God wants us to weep, but only as a particularly delicious way of enjoying ourselves. Lovibond tells how a medieval friar's ghost revisits an old convent, now used as a country seat. He mistakes "R—e, blushing maid" for a nun because of her modish "capuchin." She corrects his mistake and reads him a lecture against celibacy, interpreting "Thou shalt not kill" to mean "Thou shalt not refrain from creating life."

She ceas'd—the monk in shades of night
 Confus'dly fled away,
 And superstition's clouds dissolv'd
 In sense, and beauty's ray⁶⁸

That Lovibond would agree with Bishop Lavington's comparison between Papists and Methodists we learn from *To Laura, On Her Receiving a Mysterious Letter from a Methodist Divine*. The Methodist is of course a Tartuffe who urges impossible austerities upon Laura in the hope that the strain will be too much for her innocence.

Now he wishes you chaste for the glory of Heaven,—
 Now frail—for the pleasure of man

True virtue, Lovibond insists, is never grim or fanatical.

Know you God as he is, wise, good, beyond measure,
 No tyrant in horrors array'd,
 But a father, who smiles on the innocent pleasure
 Of amiable creatures he made!

We must not forget, however, that the highest pleasure lies in adding to the total of general bliss. Thus a fountain, endowed with speech by an inscription, ends its address to the passer-by.

O learn of me—no partial rill,
 No slumbering selfish pool be you,
 But social laws alike fulfil,
 O flow for all creation too!⁶⁹

For this tender-hearted fribble, religion is an outgushing of the milk of human kindness watered with happy tears.

Let others toil for wealth or pow'r,
 I court the sweetly-vacant hour

⁶⁸ *Hitchin Convent. A Tale*

⁶⁹ *Inscription for a Fountain*

Down life's smooth current calmly glide,
Nor vex'd with cares, nor rack'd with pride
Give me, O Nature! to explore
Thy lovely charms, I ask no more⁶⁴

These lines will serve to introduce the Reverend Richard Jago (1715-1781),⁶⁵ a mild but persistent champion of artless nature. He is not without traces of a desire to be taken for a wit, and his Swiftian "Town Eclogue," *The Scavengers*, is too coarse for a man of sensibility. On the whole, however, his work is more truly represented by his prettily humane "elegies" on *The Blackbirds*, *The Goldfinches*, and *The Swallows*.⁶⁶ He has a real tenderness for animals, and protests in *Edge-Hill* against the cruelty of the hunter. Jago hails Shakespeare for having scorned

the rules of the proud Stagyrte,
And learning's tedious toil⁶⁷

Milton receives a more substantial tribute in *Adam or, the Fatal Disobedience An Oratorio*.⁶⁸ *Peytoe's Ghost* is a ballad on a contemporary ghost story. In keeping with these preromantic symptoms is Jago's devotion to

Dear Liberty! when rightly understood,
Prime social bliss!⁶⁹

Neither Christian nor sentimental religion, however, is abundant in Jago's poems. His longest work, the loco-descriptive *Edge-Hill*, is disappointing in this respect although he speaks of "Singing the praises of creative love."⁷⁰ He refers in passing to a renovated priory, which now,

where Superstition long
Her gloomy rites maintain'd, a tranquil scene

⁶⁴ *Labour and Genius*

⁶⁵ Son of a Cornishman who was rector of a Warwickshire living. At school in Solihull he began a lifelong friendship with Shenstone. William Somerville, a member of his father's parish, encouraged his early efforts in poetry. After graduating from University College, Oxford, where he had been a servitor, he was ordained in 1736. Eventually he became rector of Kimcote in Leicestershire as well as vicar of Snitterfield in Warwickshire. He lived chiefly at Snitterfield, where he puttered with his grounds in emulation of Shenstone. His poems were published posthumously in 1784. He brought out two sermons in 1755 and 1763 respectively.

⁶⁶ *The Blackbirds*, the least ambitious and most successful of the three, was admired by Shenstone and set to music by the organist of Worcester Cathedral.

⁶⁷ *Edge-Hill*, Book I. He also provides a silly parody of 'To be or not to be' in *Hamlet's Soliloquy, Imitated*.

⁶⁸ A condensed version of *Paradise Lost* in oratorio form. I know of no evidence that it was ever set to music. The recitatives and airs are practically verbatim from Milton, the rhymed choruses are Jago's.

⁶⁹ *Edge-Hill*, Book IV.

⁷⁰ The descriptive element also is neither very important nor very successfully managed. Jago is chiefly concerned to be informative on topography, local history, and landscape gardening.

Of gentler arts, and pleasures more refin'd,
Displays ⁷¹

Much less to be expected is an assault from the viewpoint of common sense upon Berkeleyan idealism

Requires there aught of learning's pompous aid
To prove that all this outward frame of things
Is what it seems, not unsubstantial air,
Ideal vision, or a waking dream,
Without existence, save what fancy gives?
Shall we, because we strive in vain to tell
How matter acts on incorporeal mind,

reject what sober sense
And calmest thought attest?

This were to quit the day
And seek our path at midnight To renounce
Man's surest evidence, and idolize
Imagination

Jago has none of Berkeley's dread of the materialistic implications of the natural sciences In fact he devotes a long passage in Book I to the way in which geology corroborates the Scriptural account of the Flood "Such," he concludes,

is the structure, such the wave-worn face
Of Earth's huge fabric! beauteous to the sight,
And stor'd with wonders, to the attentive mind
Confirming, with persuasive eloquence
Drawn from the rocky mount or watry fen,
Those sacred pages, which record the past,
And awfully predict its future doom

But Jago is not without a more old-fashioned sort of Christianity At the close of *Edge-Hill*, adopting the tone of Young, he suddenly shifts to a lengthy discourse on the vanity of human ambition under the threat of death and the consequent desirability of religious faith as providing assurance of an afterlife The same ideas are stated more succinctly in *An Elegy on Man*, where immortality is compared to the caterpillar which bursts its "silken tomb" and soars aloft as a butterfly So it is with man.

Yet from this silent mansion too
Anon you see him rise,
No more a crawling worm to view,
But tenant of the skies.

⁷¹ Compare a contemptuous reference to "Gothic darkness" in *Ardenna*

Another analogy from natural history appears in *The Swallows An Elegy*. Instinct, he says, impels the birds to migrate to sunnier climes when winter approaches. Has man no voice to assure him that "some happier clime" awaits him beyond the grave?

Yes, yes, the sacred oracles we hear,
That point the path to realms of endless joy,
That bid our trembling hearts no danger fear,
Though clouds surround, and angry skies annoy

Then let us wisely for our flight prepare,
Nor count this stormy world our fix'd abode,
Obey the call, and trust our leader's care,
To smooth the rough, and light the darksome road

Rural retirement, the "social bliss" of liberty, fossils on the mountaintops, caterpillars, swallows—all such aspects of the natural revelation are in harmony with the "sacred oracles" of Scripture. Sensibility is much to be desired, but let it be common-sensibility, far removed from the wild visions of Berkeley.

I know almost nothing about Miss Mary Whately beyond the fact that a subscription volume of her *Original Poems on Several Occasions* was published by Dodsley in 1764. In her dedication to Lady Wrottesley she describes these verses as "the Amusements of Youth, Leisure, and Solitude, written without any intention of being made public." Complimentary verses by John Langhorne introduce the volume, and in a poem addressed to him she says that Shenstone, "sweet Bard," has often praised her work.⁷⁸

There is reason to believe that Miss Whately, unless exceptionally modest, was not richly endowed with physical allure. She thanks

the gracious Providence,
Which, kindly sparing, gave [me] no transient Charms,
Nor bid bright Beauty gild this fading Form
These might have tempted the Seducer's Wiles,
Who seek to ruin what they most admire.⁷⁹

Things being as they are, in old age she will be able to look back upon a blameless life. In *The Vanity of External Accomplishments* she glances rather sourly at women who are more tempting to the seducer. Belinda's

⁷⁸ To the Rev Mr J Langhorne, on Reading his Visions of Fancy, etc

⁷⁹ To the Rev Mr Welchman at Tanworth

beauty will soon decay, and then she will have nothing with which to "fix the Friend" Delia is a chatterbox and a ninny, but everyone admires her lips and eyes Men are largely to blame for this perversion of standards What *she* wants, she informs Nature, is "Health, and Poetry, and Peace,"

So my last Breath shall praise thee when I die,
And my Life vanish in a tuneful Sigh

After all this one is relieved to hear that at last she married the Reverend Randle Darwall, M.A.

Miss Whately's volume includes some light epistolary prattle, a few pastorals, and a few love poems with a pastoral setting On the whole, however, she is a very serious woman To a clerical friend she confides her ambition to write divine verse⁷⁴ She has lofty views on the aims of poetry, and is shocked by its present degradation It is the task of the Muse,

thro' Nature's varied Plan,
To trace the Goodness of Almighty Power,
To vindicate the Ways of God to Man,
Soothe Care's deep Gloom, and cheer the lonely Hour.

Shame to the Hind, that first Her Pow'r abused,
And with licentious Freedom stain'd the Page,
Whose Wit infectious Poison wide diffus'd,
Or sacrific'd to Gold the noble Rage⁷⁵

The assertion that happiness is to be found only in virtue⁷⁶ indicates nothing as to her religious beliefs, but several poems are more explicitly Christian *Hymn on Christmas Day*—not a hymn at all, but a reflective poem in heroic couplets—praises the Saviour for descending to redeem man from sin *Occasioned by reading some Sceptical Essays* demands of one Pyrrhonius (Bolingbroke? Hume?)

Can thy weak Mind unfold Creation's Laws?
Of Self-existence can it trace the Cause?

She challenges him even to explain why cherries are red and triumphantly concludes

Till Nature's secret Paths thou hast explor'd,
Say, canst thou hope to comprehend its Lord?
Henceforth, fond Man, thy impious Search restrain;

⁷⁴ *Ibid*

⁷⁵ *Elegy on the Uses of Poetry*

⁷⁶ *Elegy on the Search of Happiness*

Can finite Beings infinite explain?
 With vain Enquiries rack thy Thoughts no more,
 Believe, admire, love, tremble, and adore

Though she may not know it, her thought is like that of Bishop Butler: natural revelation is no less mysterious than supernatural revelation. That her answer to the sceptic is fundamentally sceptical does not occur to her.

From apologetics she gladly turns to the contemplative retirement tradition. She adores both the form and the content of Gray's *Elegy*. In subjects like *Rural Happiness*, *Hymn to Solitude*, and *The Pleasures of Contemplation*, she plainly thinks, lies all that is most elegant and affecting in poetry.

Give me to climb the Mountain's Brow,
 When Morn's first Blushes rise,
 And view the fair extensive Scene
 With Contemplation's Eyes

And while the raptur'd woodland Choir
 Pour forth their love-taught Lays,
 I'll tune the grateful Matin Song
 To my Creator's Praise⁷⁷

Probably *The Pleasures of Contemplation*, with its paraphernalia of ghosts, fairies, and a ruined abbey, owes more to Thomas Warton than to Gray. Against the champions of the active life she asserts the benefits of crepuscular pensiveness.

Is this what Men, to Thought estrang'd, miscall
 Despondence? this dull Melancholy's Scene?
 To trace th' Eternal Cause thro' all his Works,
 Minutely and magnificently wise?
 Mark the Gradations which thro' Nature's Plan
 Join each to each, and form the vast Design?

When the sun's light grows dim there is scope for a more glorious illumination.

Rich Intellect, that scorns corporeal Bonds,
 With more than Mid-Day Radiance gilds the Scene
 The Mind, now rescu'd from the Cares of Day,
 Roves unrestrain'd thro' the wide Realms of Space

⁷⁷ *Hymn to Solitude*

This conception of the free, rich, roving intellect has interesting possibilities, but Miss Whately is not the person to grasp them. They are more vigorously exploited by the Reverend Henry Moore (1732-1802).⁷⁸ His career, considered in relation to the quality of his poems, is instructive. His father was minister to a Presbyterian congregation in Plymouth. In 1749 the son entered Dr Doddridge's academy in Northampton, but when Doddridge died in 1751 young Moore, after dedicating a poem to his master's memory, was transferred to an academy in Daventry. Here he was a schoolfellow of Joseph Priestley.⁷⁹ After completing his education he entered the Presbyterian ministry. Like most English Presbyterians of the period who had not gone all the way to Socinianism, he was an Arian. In 1787, when his flock in Madbury, Devonshire, shocked him by entering the Methodist fold, he assumed charge of a Presbyterian chapel at Liskeard, Cornwall, where he remained until his death.

J Aikin, the editor of Moore's posthumous poems, describes him as modest, retiring, and handicapped by delicate health. A psychologist might regard his poems as an example of overcompensation, for they abound in noisy confidence and misdirected vigor. When they are not "odes" they are usually "rhapsodies." He repeats a few ideas again and again with a passion which, though turgid and poorly controlled, seems entirely genuine. He is a bad poet, but his particular kind of badness reminds one of the early work of Coleridge.

Moore often associates religion with rural retirement. He withdraws from "the world's delusive scene" to woo Religion, the "pleasing awful Fair." He finds her

beneath the brown-rob'd wood,
Where Contemplation sits in musing mood,
Sooth'd by the hollow gales, and falling flood,
What time the sun to other realms is roll'd,
And Eve's bright tints of purple and of gold
Faint slowly from the western skies away.⁸⁰

⁷⁸ His *Poems, Lyrical and Miscellaneous* were published posthumously in 1803. What is apparently the only poem published during his lifetime, *Private Life, a Moral Rhapsody*, appeared in 1795. It seems safe to assume, however, that a man of such ebullient emotions who was born in 1732 must have written a considerable amount of verse before 1780.

⁷⁹ In 1785 he contributed to Priestley's *Commentaries and Essays*. Other prose works were *An Essay on Fundamentals* (1759) and *A Word to Mr Madan* (against Madan's defense of polygamy in *Thelyphthora*).

⁸⁰ *Ode to Religion*. See also *On Retirement* where "Vot'ries of Nature" are said to "trace in varied forms the Sov'reign Good."

But for Moore contemplation implies no Wordsworthian "wise passiveness" It is an energetic rapture akin to the burning devotion of the seraph

Devotion! daughter of the sphere!
With heav'n-erected eye be near,
And make my breast thy favour'd residence,
Propitious there dispense
The love sublime, the sacred energy,
Which kindling thro' the Brethren of the sky,
Illume their smiles, their melody inspire,
Exalt their raptures, and inflame their fire ⁸¹

These angelic pleasures, we learn from *A Vernal Ode*, are most keenly felt by man when he beholds the spring landscape, where, in the Thomsonian manner,

The hills rejoice around, the vallies sing,
And e'en rough mountains gratulate the Spring,
While the gay quires, that haunt the shelt'ring shade,
Their untaught music mix, to glad the groves,
Where Contemplation, sweetly-pensive Maid,
With Peace and Rapture roves

At such times, joy is not merely an individual but a social sentiment, a part of the cosmic benevolence which pervades the scene It is a reflection of the pleasure with which God himself regards His handiwork

Rejoicing in the good, his hands bestow,
Th' Almighty Father looks well-pleas'd below,
But chief, his fav'rite work to see,
The pious, grateful, social Soul,
Where tun'd to Nature's harmony
The softest, sweetest passions roll,
That throbs in sympathy with woe,
That flames with friendship's holy glow,
That swells with wishes unconfin'd
To scatter blessings o'er Mankind,
And, in divine resembling lines imprint,
Leaves his own image on the gen'rous breast

There is so much divinity in the social soul that her wishes may well be unconfined God is reminded that

Some instinct from within,
Thine inspiration, wings her [the soul] with sublime
Beyond the bounds of nature, and of time

⁸¹ *Ode to Wisdom* Earlier in the poem he has asserted that the highest wisdom is devotion

The strong and restless energy of Mind,
That roves the fields of Science unconfin'd,

Or far outflies the comet's blazing race,
And seeks new systems thro' the wilds of space—
Immense designs,
Immortal hopes, and unextinguish'd fires,
Exalt her vast aspiring thought to Thee,
And only find a bound in thine Infinity⁸²

Moore is heedless of the possibility that the "instinct from within" may be the voice of human pride rather than the voice of God. Fame, he grants, is nothing in itself, but the impulse to seek fame must be defended as

Divinity's implanted fire,
Which bids the Soul to glorious heights aspire,

And wing her eagle flight
To grandeur, fame, and bliss without a bound
Ambition's ardent hopes, and golden dreams,
Her tow'ring madness, and her wild extremes,
Unfold this sacred Truth to Reason's eye,
That "Man was made for Immortality"⁸³

Such thoughts look backward to Young and forward to the romantics

At times, however, the warm gush of Moore's optimism is chilled by an undercurrent of doubt. Some heritage from an older, firmer Protestantism forces him to recognize the gap between ideal and real. An angel sent down to survey the world sorrows to see how abysmally man, the "master-work of Heav'n," has fallen below the intentions of his Creator. The seraph at first is delighted to see a procession on its way to church, but when he looks inside the edifice,

There Superstition sits in idol state,
To kneeling trembling crowds denouncing fate,

At her command the deadly lightning flies,
At her command th' avenging Furies rise,

Grim Terrors, Panic Fears surround the shrine,
The wild Enthusiast feels the flame divine,
Sad Melancholy sighs for ever there,

⁸² *A Lyric Rhapsody*.

⁸³ *The Vanity of Fame*

And in her dreary dungeon raves despair
 A madding Rout around
 By turns devoutly curse, devoutly pray,
 For God infuriate deal the deathful wound ⁸⁴

The context shows that he is thinking not only of popery but of a more general perversion of what should be a religion of love. Why do men so persistently misuse God's gifts? Why do they refuse to act the divinity which they possess?

How vast the Human Soul,
 Whose heav'n-descended energy aspires,
 Beyond the bounds of this sublunar pole,
 Beyond the solar road, and empyrean fires!
 Yet this sublime, immense, immortal pow'r,
 When soaring at Heav'n's loftiest tow'r,
 Down, down a little glitt'ring clay
 Can draw from its ethereal way,
 Or one soft flatt'ring lust,
 Pollute its noblest glories in the dust ⁸⁵

The Reverend Henry Moore, then, retains some vestigial remnants of the Christian doctrine of sin, but nothing in his poems suggests that he remembers the Christian remedy. Apparently the evil can be cured only by making one's wishes still more unbounded, more rapturously social, and hence more godlike.

The curiously divided character of William Woty (1731?-1791) ⁸⁶ is evidenced by the fact that his *Blossoms of Helicon* (1763) was subscribed for by Churchill (10 books), Wilkes (10 books), Robert Lloyd (5 books), Shenstone, and Dr. Dodd (6 books). Here witty libertinism and sentimentalism combine their patronage. Woty has a comic and a serious side which seem wholly unrelated to each other. On both sides, to be sure, he is quite harmless, though one cannot imagine that a writer so warmly supported by Churchill, Wilkes, and Lloyd was a precisian in actual life.

⁸⁴ *An Angel's Survey of the World*

⁸⁵ *Ode to Divine Wisdom*

⁸⁶ He came to London, probably from the Isle of Wight, in the late 1750's as a solicitor's clerk. By 1760 he was supporting himself chiefly by literary hackwork, but in 1767 he became legal adviser and companion to Earl Ferrers. In 1763 he collaborated with his older friend Francis Fawkes in a miscellany entitled *The Poetical Calendar*. Woty's poems have never been collected, but the items named in my list of Primary Sources comprise nearly all of them.

Of his less trivial poems, *Stanzas on Truth* suggests Churchill's swaggering pose of probity. In *Fashion*, after rightly regretting his lack of "Churchill's vigour," he castigates genteel vices in obvious imitation of the greater satirist. Fashion, he says, can

ev'n invalidate the Scripture's force,
Give Christ the lie, and warrant a divorce

And *Personal Satire* alludes to civilized crimes which

Make the rude Black our holy faith despise,
Shrink from our God, and whiten with surprise

In the same poem he rebukes the "gorg'd Divine" who recommends Lenten abstinence, the "canting Saints" who preach a charity they never practise, and the bishops whose pride is a disgrace to their office

Of all the Characters, that please the least,
Sure none so bad, as an o'erbearing priest,
Nor one so good, as he who meekly wears
His robe, the type of whose command he bears
But wide the difference, tho' the same their Coats,
'Tween Parson Adams, and a Titus Oates

With a lighter touch he depicts *Your Good Sort of People*, who

In general are those, who the Sacrament take,
And make it a Point not the Sabbath to break,
Go home, scold their Children, their Servants abuse,
And propagate Scandal for neighbourly News,
Skin-deep their Religion, and founded on Art,
Oft seen in the Face, but ne'er felt in the Heart,
With whose outward Glosses I ne'er could accord,
From such Good Sort of People deliver me, Lord!

But these satirical flings are not, as in Churchill, symptomatic of distaste for all institutional religion. In fact Woty is so definitely a Christian that if he were not also a frivolous wit and a rather extreme sentimentalist he should have been included in the preceding chapter. Quite in the manner of Edward Young, he warns a dissolute youth to reform *now* before it is too late. Sombre threats are followed by a word of encouragement

Live well—the rectitude of living well
The sacred page informs, and then no cause
Of penitence hast thou. Faith with good works,

Co-operating strong through life's short stage,
 Each adjutant to each, shall far outweigh
 All common faults that human flesh is heir to⁸⁷

The extremely un-Calvinistic view of salvation is worth noting

"In spite of Subtlety, in spite of Wit," he sticks to his belief in *Particular Providence*

From the Ship's bottom when the Plankings break,
 The rock's close fragment often stops the leak
 Some call it luck, and others fortune call,
 But know 'tis Providence

The same poem praises the fruits of missionary work among men whose minds have not been rendered sceptical by subtlety and wit

And hark! sweet Echo from the Savage shore,
 Unblest, or undebauch'd with Learning's store,
 Where simple Nature un-enlighten'd reigns,
 Pours on my ear the full accordant strains

Appropriately, therefore, he detests the slave trader,

who, for the sake of pelf,
 Would damn mankind, and even damn thyself,
 All tender ties, all social order crush,
 Hence to thy closet—hence, and learn to blush!
 Go! seek humanity—her path explore—
 Nature will guide thee—but religion more⁸⁸

One infers that there is no conflict between nature and religion but that the latter perfects the teachings of the former

There is missionary work to be done in England as well as in Africa. A dialogue in verse entitled *Sunday Schools* shows how a nobleman's heart is softened, and his purse opened, by the arguments of his chaplain. The chief argument is utilitarian, for the poem, which appeared in 1789 in *Poetical Amusements*, belongs to a time when religion was much appreciated as a preserver of social stability. The man who reads his Bible will never become a criminal, and he will be contented with his lot

Survey the Rustic, clad in simple State,
 At Church devout, and at his Home sedate
 Earnest he turns the sacred pages o'er,
 Prompt to believe, and fervent to adore
 With mind compos'd he sleeps the Night away,
 And meets with Joy the Labors of the Day

⁸⁷ *The Exhortation*. Observe the reminiscence of *Hamlet*

⁸⁸ Preface to *Poetical Works* (1770)

Opposition to the slave trade, support of foreign missions and Sunday Schools, friendship with Dr Dodd—all this suggests a strong Evangelical influence. The leaders of the party would shake their heads at his notion of combining faith and good works, but many of their followers were less meticulous in theology. How Woty can praise *both* Sunday Schools and Churchill, however, remains a puzzle.

He seems a pure sentimentalist of the “social bliss” type when he hails the

Queen of the lib’ral, vast, extensive thought,
Sweet Charity! Oh! lead me to the cell
Where haggard Famine o’er her dying race
Sits weeping
There let me see thy hand
Raise her dejected head, and give the means
Of present comfort to her sobbing soul,
So shall my tears convince thee, that my heart
Is prone to pity, tho’ I can’t relieve⁹⁹

Similarly he assures a young nobleman that

true Religion elevates the man,
When Charity, to no one sect confin’d,
Glows universal in his generous mind

But there are limits to this breadth: his charity, if nonsectarian, is at least Christian. The noble youth should not seek retirement from a selfish desire to escape his responsibilities or to indulge his “irritated spleen,” but to meditate schemes for human betterment.

For all are born (whatever thou mayst think)
To join the general, and the social link
But above all (’tis an immortal theme)
Contemplate on the great, the good Supreme

And this is not a merely Platonic concept

His love to man in silent thought explore,
Bow down with meek submission and adore,
Thy meditation farther on pursue,
And keep the blessed Saviour in thy view
Peruse the lasting page of holy writ,
That mocks the weak attacks of human wit.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ *To Charity*

¹⁰⁰ *A Prospect of Life: An Epistle to a young Nobleman*

The same tendency to treat favorite sentimental themes in an Evangelical spirit may often be observed in the numerous poems which find God's love at work in external nature

Turn upwards, eyes! and see yon flaming arch!
How glows each sacred light! Yon falling star
Behold—There view the Deity immense,
'Tis he who shines in all, th' Eternal One,
Who form'd and rules with awe the wondrous whole
Here let the atheist tremble as he looks,
And blush into belief—But can there live
A monster so absurd?—Where art thou, then,
O Conscience—lock'd in sleep?—Then must thou wake
In torments wrapt, when Death disturbs thy dream ⁸¹

Woty finds sermons not only in the universal system but in particular objects. He asks how Lothario can "Contemplate the wild nosegay, and be dumb", ⁸² and the glow of autumn foliage prompts an outburst which goes beyond its indebtedness to Pope

To him, as perfect in a leaf, as man,
To whom all nature's breadth is but a span,
The gracious, great Omnipotent of heav'n,
For this, be praise ascrib'd and thanks be giv'n ⁸³

Although he sees God everywhere in nature, he reserves his deepest feelings for a Deity quite independent of flowers and leaves

But oh! when retrospection shews the cross
Where, in atonement for the sins of man,
Thy precious Son sweat blood, and with a sigh,
A duteous sigh, expir'd—redeeming then
The forfeit soul of mortals—how I marvel
At this immensity of love!—I weep—
Ungrateful as I am, I weep—for oh!
Reflection prompts the penitential tear
Flow on—'tis grief celestial—if it springs
Pure through the heart's contrition, Faith has yet
Comforts in store for me ⁸⁴

Woty, indeed, can pray not only in contemplation's grove but in church. His taste in ecclesiastical architecture is noteworthy, for although his piety smacks of the chapel he loves a Gothic edifice,

⁸¹ *The Moonlight Night*. Of course he has read *Night IX* of Young. See also *The Moralist*, *To Winter*, *Stanzas Written in a Wood*, *To Solitude*, *Ode to Gratitude*, *Spring*, and *Church-Langton*.

⁸² *The Moralist*. Is the title a reminiscence of Shaftesbury?

⁸³ *Church-Langton*

⁸⁴ *Hymn to the Deity*

With length'ning ayles, and windows that impart
 A gloomy steady light to chear the heart,
 Such as affects the soul, and which I see
 With joy, celestial Westminster¹ in thee
 Not like St Paul's, beneath whose ample dome,
 No thought arises of the life to come
 For, tho' superb, not solemn is the place,
 The mind but wanders o'er the distant space,
 Where 'stead of thinking on the God, most men
 Forget his presence, to remember Wren

At Ely, Lincoln, or York, on the other hand, "all the God comes rushing on the soul"⁹⁵

How deeply rooted are the religious convictions of this witty-pious friend of Churchill, this Evangelical medievalist? They seem to be based upon a sentimental pragmatism. True or false, his faith does him good, and he rebukes the infidel who would deprive him of it

But if to no good purpose I've believ'd,
 'Tis sweet to be agreeably deceiv'd
 Why wake me from my dream, thou worst of foes!
 My golden dream, and murder my repose,
 Repose, that's innocent, that harms not thee,
 But which refreshes, and enlivens me⁹⁶

Must we conclude that Woty's faith is merely a soothing flight of fancy? Here, at any rate, is the Will to Believe on its lowest level.⁹⁷

The last poet of this lengthy chapter is William Julius Mickle (1735-1788),⁹⁸ so good and pious a man that he could not so much as hear the names of Voltaire and Hume with equanimity.⁹⁹ As a prose controversialist

⁹⁵ *Church-Langton*

⁹⁶ *Particular Providence*

⁹⁷ For poems by Woty interesting to the student of preromanticism but not directly pertinent to our subject, see *Chevy Chase* (modernized in heroic couplets), *The Pettifogger* (friendly parody of Gray's *Elegy*), *Gray's Church Yard Elegy* (translated into Latin), *An Autumnal Song* (against shooting partridges), and *The Ewes' Lamentation on the Night of Separation from the Lambs* (How would 'relentless Man' like to have his own darling child torn from him?).

⁹⁸ His father became a minister of the Kirk of Scotland after some experience as a physician. He preached in various dissenting chapels in London but also worked as a bookseller's hack on the translation of Bayle's *Dictionary*—a strange task for one of his cloth. Later he established a brewery in Edinburgh. William Julius, who had been employed as a clerk in the brewery, took over the business on coming of age, but neglected it in favor of poetry and came to London in 1763 with a heavy burden of debt. His poem on *Providence* won the attention of Lyttelton, but his lordship promised more help than he gave. In 1765, however, Mickle became corrector to the Clarendon Press. In 1779 and 1780, he served as secretary and purser in the navy, and his prize money at last enabled him to pay his brewery debts.

⁹⁹ Memoir of Mickle by John Ireland, quoted in Chalmers, XVII, 512

he tilted against Arianism in *A Letter to Dr Harwood* and against Deism in *Voltaire in the Shades*. Bishop Lowth urged him to take orders in the Church of England, "but Mickle refused the offer, lest his uniform support of revealed religion should be imputed to interested motives."¹⁰⁰

There is less religion in his poetry than in his prose. His celebrated translation of the *Lusiad* (1775) of course provides no material for us, but we may note that he added to the second edition (1778) a not unfriendly discussion of the religion of the Brahmins. The Spenserian imitation originally called *The Concubine*, his best known original poem, is a moral allegory in which, despite a few pious remarks, religion is not an organic element. Mickle likes scenery and ruins, Druids and Spenser, Shakespeare and Milton. He provides us with three pseudo-medieval ballads and four lyrics in Scots dialect.

Mickle seems to have paraphrased Psalm LXVIII chiefly in order to compose an "ode for music." More interesting is an ode entitled *Knowledge*, written at the age of eighteen. Musing "on a hill's green bosom," the poet bursts forth in praise of knowledge, hailing in familiar terms the greatness of Boyle and Newton. But a gray-bearded sage then appears. He belittles "letter'd pride," pointing to the happiness of "the simple hind," and summing up

Then wouldst thou, mortal, rise divine,
Let innocence of soul be thine,
With active goodness join'd
My heart shall then confess thee bless'd,
And, ever lively, joyful taste
The pleasures of the mind

The only true knowledge, the poet decides, is that of "conscious worth." Here Newtonianism and anti-intellectualism confront each other, and the latter wins the field.

Doubtless a product of Mickle's travels in Portugal is *An Epithalamium, Written in Hebrew by Abram Depas, On the Marriage of Jacob Franco, Esq., to Miss Abigail D'Aguilar, Daughter of the Late Baron D'Aguilar*. It praises God for the happy day in a traditional manner but is worth noting as a rarity. I have observed no other English translation of contemporary Hebrew poetry. *May-Day, Or, The Druidical Festival* is a more romantic piece of religious exoticism combining some Gothic spookery with the cult

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.* p. 510

of "Nature and Nature's God" in a sedulous imitation of Gray's *Bard* The Druids are made to chant

Retain, ye hills, the solemn sound,
Till Echo through her fairy round
Repeat it to the silent list'ning vale,
Raise, raise, ye bards, the melody,
Wide spread the hands, low bend the knee,
And on Creation's morn the great Creator hail!

A Night Piece, which despite the title follows Young more closely than Parnell, is a graveyard meditation in blank verse mingling pious melancholy with enthusiasm for the dead heroes of Scotland But *Pollio An Elegiac Ode* is more rewarding The Advertisement tells us that it was "first suggested on revisiting the Ruins and Woods that had been the scene of his early Amusements with a deserving Brother"—a good opportunity for an imitation of Gray, since *Tintern Abbey* is yet to be written

Oh Partner of my Infant Griefs and Joys!
Big with the Scenes now past my Heart o'erflows,
Bids each Endearment, fair as once, to rise,
And dwells luxurious on her melting Woes

His pleasure would be enriched by knowing "the awful Secrets of the Dead" Perhaps the wish is not wholly vain, for

Man's Bosom glows with that celestial Fire,
Which scorns Earth's Luxuries, which smiles at Pain,
And wings his Spirit with sublime Desire

This fire is kindled by the contemplation of God in nature Thus it was with the prophets of old, who remind us of the Druids in *May-Day*

So to the dark-brow'd Wood, or sacred Mount,
In antient Days, the holy Seers retir'd,
And, led in Vision, drank at Siloe's Fount,
While rising Extacies their Bosoms fir'd,

Restor'd Creation bright before them rose,
The burning Desarts smil'd as Eden's Plains,
One friendly Shade the Wolf and Lambkin chose,
The flowery Mountains sung, "Messiah reigns!"

Mickle does not hope for such visions, but he will do what he can

Though fainter Raptures my cold Breast inspire,
Yet, let me oft frequent this solemn Scene,
Oft to the Abbey's shatter'd Walls retire,
What time the Moonshine dimly gleams between

In the Gothic moonlight he beholds the symbol of Christianity

There, where the Cross in hoary Ruin nods,
And weeping Yews o'ershade the letter'd Stones,
While midnight Silence wraps these drear Abodes,
And soothes me wand'ring o'er my kindred Bones,

Let kindled Fancy view the glorious Morn,
When from the bursting Graves the Just shall rise,
All Nature smiling and, by Angels borne,
Messiah's Cross far blazing o'er the Skies

Though Mickle is not for us an important poet, let him be credited with one striking achievement he has managed to sentimentalize the Cross

The Cross appears again in *Almada Hill An Epistle from Lisbon*, a loco-descriptive poem with an exotic setting The medieval associations of the scene are dealt with sympathetically The "ardent soul of gallant chivalry" is hailed as the preserver of "Christian Europe" against the Saracen invader

In awful waste the fairest cities moan'd,
And human liberty expiring groan'd
When chivalry arose —her ardent eye
Sublime, that fondly mingled with the sky,
Where patience watch'd, and stedfast purpose frown'd,
Mix'd with devotion's fire, she darted round,
Stern and indignant, on her glitt'ring shield,
The cross she bore, and proudly to the field
High plum'd she rush'd, by honour's dazzling fir'd,
Conscious of Heaven's own cause, and all inspir'd
By holy vows

How prophetic of Walter Scott are these lines! To associate them with a revival of Catholicism would be rash, for Mickle's background is no less Protestant than that of Woty, the lover of Gothic churches All one can say is that in these writers Protestantism has been sentimentalized to the point where it can toy with the more picturesque aspects of the Catholic tradition Thus Mickle goes on in defense of chivalry against the sneering man of reason

Let supercilious wisdom's smiling pride
The passion wild of those bold days deride,
But let the humbler sage with reverence own
That something sacred glows, of name unknown,

Glow in the deeds that Heav'n delights to crown,
Something that boasts an impulse uncontroll'd
By school-taught prudence, and its maxims cold

In the Middle Ages he finds a passion which is so thrilling that he is tempted to call it sacred, but he has forgotten its name

Though our fourteen poets, as a group, are somewhat later than those of Chapter VII, in moving through the list we do not observe a steady crescendo of sentimentalism. Even the inference that the 1760-1780 period is more sentimental than the 1740-1760 period, though tempting, is rash in view of the paucity of the evidence. A solid distinction between the two chapters lies in the fact that the present one contains a much larger number of names familiar to students of the eighteenth century. In this instance fame has not been altogether a strumpet: the strongly sentimental poets of this chapter, though anything but a band of geniuses, are a more accomplished group than the milder sentimentalists of Chapter VII.

Eight of the fourteen poets of Chapter VIII are laymen (including one woman) as against six in Chapter VII (including four women). The difference is lessened, however, by the fact that three laymen of Chapter VII (West, Beattie, and Mickle) were well-known amateur theologians. All the clergymen of this chapter are Anglicans except Moore, an English Arian Presbyterian. Latitudinarianism of various shades predominates in the theology of the whole group, especially if we include the Scotch "Moderates," Beattie and Mickle. But the Evangelicalism of Dodd and Woty, and the dubious Quakerism of Scott, show that Protestantism need not always pass through the latitudinarian phase on its way to sentimentalism.

Ten of the fourteen poets belong to the middle class, three to the upper and one to the lower. The proportion is about the same as in Chapter VII. Only in Lovibond, and in Woty on his frivolous side, is the literary influence of the aristocratic tradition manifest. Except for Mason, a stout Whig, there are few signs of political motivation, but the liberty-virtue-pure religion-commerce complex, now more or less a general habit of mind, is a Whiggish heritage which appears in several of these poets.

A retrospect of Chapters VII and VIII will provide a general description of sentimentalized Christianity. That all the poets of these two chapters regard themselves as Christians seems clear enough. Though in some cases biographical knowledge is helpful in supporting the inference, the poems themselves, taken as a whole, are identifiable as the work of eighteenth-

century Protestant Christians¹⁰¹ They frequently assume or declare Christian beliefs, they reprehend the atheist and the deist The Protestantism of these poets is manifest not only in their detestation of popery but in their lack of feeling for the Church as a holy, eternal, universal communion of believing souls on both sides of the grave The sacramental element, too, is completely absent I have observed not one allusion to the Eucharist

Even when regarded from a much looser viewpoint, the Christianity of these poets departs widely from the traditional faith In his *Ideals of Religion*, A C Bradley asserts that the "starting-point" of religion is "the experience, on the one side, of my feared or felt separation from something conceived as beyond me, much greater than I am, superior to me in mode of existence and powerful over me, and, on the other side, the experience of the removal of that separation by my submission to, or union with, this something, a removal which gives me freedom and happiness Or, more briefly, it is the experience of freedom from evil attained by willed union with a being which is free from evil" Even those moderns who would describe religion in very different terms will grant that Bradley has accurately expressed the main theme of Christianity as it existed from the days of Our Lord's earthly ministry to about the middle of the seventeenth century But our poets are the heirs of elements in seventeenth-century Christianity which, judged from Bradley's standard, can hardly be called Christian at all¹⁰² Their belief in a transcendent, supernatural, superhuman Divine Being is weak and hazy They feel no radical cleavage between themselves and God, no need of being lifted out of themselves For them, "Saviour" and "Redeemer" are words of no definite meaning In this best of all possible worlds, what is there to be redeemed from?

We find, to be sure, no outright declaration of the natural goodness of man Henry Jones is exceptional in denying the sinfulness of following any of nature's impulses, and Falconer does not suggest that the innate virtue of his hero is a general human trait Mrs Latter, Thompson, and Woty have not quite forgotten the Christian's need for penitence and forgiveness Even sentimentalism cannot wholly stifle the sense of sin Mrs Jemmat laments that nature's law of benevolence so often goes unheeded, and Moore that man is so often false to the divinity within him These gloomier views, however, are submerged in waves of optimism and self-

¹⁰¹ The Catholic strain in William Thompson has been recognized as exceptional

¹⁰² The pre-seventeenth-century germination of these elements receives some attention in the concluding chapter of Vol I

confidence Lovibond, Whately, Moore, and Beattie find in the soul a more or less transcendental freedom and creativeness, a shaping spirit of imagination which man shares with God and which validates man's claim to immortality Few of their fellow-poets would disagree with them, for the group as a whole cheerfully ignores the sin-and-salvation side of Christianity

These poets regard the darker aspects of life as parts of a cosmic harmony of light and shade, of a "universal good" which, if rightly comprehended, reconciles "all partial evil" The basic metaphor in their thought is less often a "chain of being" than a great pictorial composition in *chiaroscuro*¹⁰⁸ The unifying element in this composition is the law of universal benevolence God wishes for all his creatures the greatest amount of happiness consistent with the good of the whole system Both in heaven and on earth, the rule is "social love" It unites man with God and with his fellows Human charity, however, is not a faithful reflection of divine charity unless it is cultivated for the pure joy of service Fawkes's ethic of "be good and go to heaven" falls below the sentimental standard

It is in their devotion to the ideal of "love thy neighbor" that these poets most closely approach Christianity But of course Christianity and social love are not coextensive, and to regard the former merely as an expression of the latter is to pervert religious values Sundered from the traditionally Christian awe, humility, and sense of brotherhood in sin, the benevolence of the sentimental Christian or Christian sentimentalist becomes what Goldsmith calls "the luxury of doing good"—a self-satisfied emotional indulgence which merely parodies the altruistic ideal To walk in the way of the Cross is simply to stroll beamingly, with jingling pockets, among the deserving poor

The joys of the benevolist are not unmixed with pain He seldom has enough money to buy all the "social bliss" that he craves Tremulously responsive to the sorrows of others, he is often moved to sympathetic tears But in the last analysis these tears are pleasurable, for they bear witness, to himself and to others, of his exquisite sensibility The gently pensive melancholy of retired contemplation, sometimes mingled with a more horrific graveyardism, is likewise a mood too luxuriously symptomatic of emotional distinction to include much genuine sorrow With these exceptions, which are more apparent than real, the Christian sentimentalist is all for cheerful-

¹⁰⁸ For the "chain of being" idea, see the Index of Topics of Vol. I So far as I have observed, only Lovibond makes use of it in these chapters Observe that he conceives of it not as a scale of sharply stratified levels but as "progressive" and "harmonious" See p. 260

ness in religion God, like Johnson's Dick Minim, delightedly "feasts upon his own beneficence," and He wishes us to do the same Any obstacle to this view is vigorously attacked These poets praise tolerance and moderation in theology and oppose sharply defined creeds They attach a quasi-religious significance to the ideal of liberty They detest bigotry, superstition, and priestcraft and find in Catholicism the prime, though not the only, example of these gloomy evils Equally disturbing to their cheery self-sufficiency is the enthusiasm of the Methodist³⁰⁴

Not for a moment would any of these poets deny the existence of a personal Deity who has created the physical universe and who continues to govern it with providential care Fawkes and Woty explicitly state that nature requires the guidance of God Other writers with a fairly vivid sense of supernatural realities are John Scott and the exceptional Thompson The author of *Religious Conscience*, Mrs Jemmat, Portal, Miss Whately, and Mickle prefer to think of the mind as led *through* the creation to the Creator On the whole, however, the sentimental Christian relies so largely on the natural revelation that "Nature's God" is not very clearly distinguishable from His works

The religion of our poets probably owes more to inward changes in the character of Protestantism than to external influences Stoicism as a definite philosophy counts for little in their thought, but as diluted by sentimental naturalism it is a factor worth mentioning West and Elizabeth Carter declare that the passions must be harmonized by reason, and the "only virtue gives happiness" *cliché* turns up rather frequently Blacklock praises the Stoics for their devotion to "God and Nature," while Moss opposes them because their "apathy" is hostile to sensibility A much more significant influence, though almost too closely related to the history of Christian thought to be regarded as an external one, is the type of Platonism which descends from the *Timæus* to the Neoplatonists, thence to the Cambridge Platonists, and finally to Shaftesbury, in whom to be sure it is blended with sentimentalized Stoicism and sentimentalized Epicureanism Though only Blacklock and Elizabeth Carter openly avow their indebtedness, a greatly diluted Platonic tradition is at work in the cult of an aesthetico-ethical harmony of truth, goodness, and beauty which has been created by a benignly fecund God

By this time, indeed, the universe of Christian sentimentalism is more

³⁰⁴ A poetic fury sort of enthusiasm arising from "contemplation" is sometimes favorably mentioned, but this is mistakenly felt to be quite distinct from Methodist enthusiasm

like a great work of art appealing to the emotions than like a great machine appealing to analytical reason. Shaftesbury, who has been assailed as a deist by Leland and others, wins no open praise from these poets,¹⁰⁵ but he has proved a more attractive guide than Newton. Although honor is paid to the Newtonian tradition by Mrs. Jemmat, Stockdale, James Scott, Jones, Beattie, and Jago, the sentimental poets of the 1740-1780 period are less eager than those of Volume I to attach religious values to science.¹⁰⁶ Their praise of reason is undermined by fear that reason will smash their roseate pictures of man and nature. They prefer to rely upon a common sense which, although it exhibits bewilderingly shifting degrees of toughness and tenderness, remains anti-intellectualistic in all its phases. "Reason is powerless to fathom grace," say Abbott and West in substance, "Man must be content to wonder and adore." Blacklock tells us not to argue but to contemplate nature. Jones, Mason, Beattie, Whately, and Mickle emphasize the limitations and perils of reason when it invades the province of religion. Beattie, slightly varying the idea of the free creative soul voiced by Lovibond, Whately, and Moore, values fancy because it soars above the scepticism of the mere reasoner. Less confidently, but in much the same spirit, Woty pleads, "Why wake me from my dream?"

On the whole, however, the anti-intellectualism of this group of poets is less often expressed in transcendental views of imaginative power than in an appeal to that "simple" nature which is above reflection precisely in being below it.¹⁰⁷ Hence the frequent appearance of primitivistic themes: the state of nature, the Golden Age, the uncorrupted child, the happy rustic, the noble African prince, the humbler but no less innocent Negro slave, miscellaneous good savages, and the wise hermit in his woodland cell.¹⁰⁸

This naturalistic ideal finds a more personal expression in that cult of rural retirement to which few of these poets fail to pay tribute. The joys of contemplation are sung again and again, together with the mingled pleasures and pains of melancholy. Here, however, one notes a division of opinion, not only among the various writers, but sometimes within the work of individuals. The bourgeois shows a strong tendency to shrink from the bustling civilization which he has made, but his conscience will not per-

¹⁰⁵ Henry Jones, though plainly indebted to Shaftesbury, mentions him as a corrupting influence. See p. 238.

¹⁰⁶ See "Newtonianism" in the Index of Topics of Vol. I.

¹⁰⁷ Latter, Blacklock, Portal, John Scott, Jago, Woty.

¹⁰⁸ Jemmat, Latter, West, Mickle, James Scott, John Scott, Portal, Dodd, Mason, Beattie, Woty.

mit him to do so wholeheartedly In so far as retirement and melancholy imply sensibility, they are to be praised In so far as they imply a gloomy antisocial sloth, they are to be condemned as sins against the religion of active benevolence The right sort of retired contemplation, by raising our thoughts to a God who wills happiness for all His creatures, fills us with a longing for "social bliss" It is a means, not an end

Though he does not reject the traditional metaphors of Christianity, the sentimental Christian is not deeply stirred by them The deities of neo-classicism, too, are badly shopworn Hence his tendency to apostrophize a pantheon of personified abstractions, half deified virtues and values such as Religion, Nature, Charity, Patience, Contemplation, Solitude, Modesty, Innocence, Benevolence, Peace, Hope, Liberty, Wisdom, and Truth But a hankering for something more tangibly exciting than these ersatz gods occasionally combines with the primitivistic trend to make him dabble in religious exoticism In such moods Druids, Brahmins, Aztecs, and even Jews have their appeal And since the Catholic tradition is hardly less remote from these writers than the cult of the Druids, it may similarly satisfy the desire for strangeness in religious feeling As an active force in the present it is abhorrent to liberty and reason, but as a relic of a more flavorsome past it has its charms for the man of sensibility The rather numerous good hermits are usually priests of Nature's God John Scott, however, shows some sympathy with monasticism, Woty likes Gothic churches, and Mickle praises the religious spirit of chivalry

The general traits of sentimental Christianity or Christian sentimentalism should now be reasonably clear To describe it in more definite terms would falsify its complex and variable character Its origins and earlier development need not be discussed here, since they have received attention in the first volume of this series

Chapter IX

SENTIMENTALISTS

FROM CHAPTER VI ONWARD, THIS STUDY MOVES AWAY FROM RELATIVELY PURE Protestantism toward relatively pure sentimentalism. In the poets who remain to be discussed, even such vestiges of Christianity as were observed in the preceding chapter will seldom be found. Some of these writers regarded themselves as Christians and some did not, but practically the only traces of positive religion which they display in their poems are derived from the cult of sentiment. The present chapter will be devoted chiefly to poets who, though not always laboriously didactic, share the usual eighteenth-century desire to impress conceptual ideas upon their readers. Chapter X will include poets in whom the urge to convince and instruct is less strong.

First, however, let us whet our possibly flagging appetites with a few hors d'oeuvres—single poems of some interest in relation to our subject. A more or less Shaftesburian doctrine of aesthetico-ethical optimism appears in an anonymous piece of 1747 entitled *Nature, a Poem Tending to shew, That every Part in the Moral World is, in a beautiful Variety, regularly ordered and adjusted to answer the several Exigencies of Things, and to compleat the Harmony of the Universe With a Particular View to the Inequalities of Life, its Difficulties, and Uses*. The influence of Pope is disquietingly obvious in such couplets as

Ev'n partial Ills, when wisely understood,
And well improv'd, become a general Good.

On the whole, the author emphasizes the diversity rather than the uniformity of the cosmic harmony. Since there are innumerable gradations of difference in the *physical* universe,

Why not, to make the moral World, conclude,
Some things more elegant, and some more rude;
Gradations various, uniformly neat

The more diversify'd, the more compleat²
 Too much of Order palls upon the Sight,
 Varieties of Prospect most delight

On this basis he can easily explain the "Inequalities of Life." Yet there must be enough order to impose a pattern upon the variety of things. The underlying metaphor is musical.

Discords with Concords sweetly blended lie,
 Well modell'd, raise more various Harmony
 Distinction Order asks, and Wants supplies,
 Hence differ'd Orders are Love's various Ties,
 Hence what disjoin'd sounds harsh, or seems awry,
 Connects, 'tis regular Variety,
 Plann'd with Design, furnish'd with wond'rous Skill,
 Alike its Part and Nature's to fulfil

To be wise and happy, then, is to appreciate the beauty of the whole pattern.

Another main element of sentimentalism is exemplified by *On Beneficence*.¹ The unknown author has been inspired by the sufferings of the poor during the extreme cold of the past winter. Approximately the first half of the poem, however, is a descriptive piece in the manner of Thomson, with a good many side glances from the creation to the Creator. At last winter departs

Then smiles all nature Nature's God to laud,
 Enrob'd in golden vestment summer comes,
 To plenty leads, and now invites to reap,
 And Autumn Glories glad the heart of man
 Thou the fair increase gave! and Thou the joy!
 While tuneful planets move the sun around,
 While flow the grateful rivers to the deep,
 While joy crown'd months repay the days we mourn,
 Arise let Universal Praise to Thee!

But in winter, just as "the parent earth" is unable to support "her vegetative world," so human fathers and mothers among the poor are unable to support their children. Here the subject of the poem begins to emerge. Turning to wealthier parents, he urges them to help the less fortunate.

And know the candidate for bliss, who ne'er
 Enjoy'd the raptures of a virtuous deed,

¹ The date of the first edition is unknown to me. I use the second edition, 1764.

The touch of elegance, the gladden'd voice
 Which strikes in unison the chords within,
 Whate'er his boasted honors, or his joys,
 Whate'er his share of Glory, he knows not
 The noblest triumph, triumph of the HEART!

The association of "social bliss" with "elegance" is symptomatic of the Shaftesbury tradition, in which taste and morals are so closely related

The reader may be spared most of the ensuing praise of beneficence. Fifteen pages are devoted to a recital of Sterne's story of Le Fevre.² The tale is told with great solemnity, the whimsical element of the original being entirely omitted. The poem concludes with an attempt to connect the pleasures of charity with the loving-kindness of God

Hail King Eternal! Soul of Mercy Thou!
 Fountain of Bliss! Enlivening Presence hail!
 Alone Thou can'st invigorate, inspire,
 And in soft murmurs o'er the Heart diffuse
 The soul-attuning harmony of Bliss,
 While vibrates to the sound the gladden'd voice
 Whene'er BENEVOLENCE, congenial power
 Awakes, whene'er the grateful tribute wide
 Around the land BENEFICENT extends,
 Thrill purest bliss, thrill to the breast of those,
 Who to the hungry gifts of Ceres give,
 Who to the naked sweet relief extend,
 Who to the fatherless a FATHER prove,
 And make the widow's heart to sing with joy

From this ripe specimen of the social gospel we turn to another anonymous poem, *An Elegy Written at a Carthusian Monastery in the Austrian Netherlands* (1775). The precursor of Matthew Arnold is not exactly "wandering between two worlds," but he is torn between the contemplative and the active aspects of sentimentalism. In the opening descriptive stanzas his model is obviously Gray

Encircling Ivy chains the mould'ring Tow'r,
 Funereal Yews throw round a death-like Gloom,
 Her Cloisters Melancholy wanders o'er,
 And Grief sits languid on the sculptur'd Tomb

² The indebtedness is acknowledged in a footnote

The beautiful melancholy scene arouses spiritual reflections A lover of retirement, the poet feels drawn toward the monks and their life

Can Error reign in these calm Seats of Peace?
Here, doth not Wisdom make her blest Abode?
Doth not thè Voice of restless Passion cease?
Here, the rapt Soul have Converse with her God?

One would credit him with some understanding of the monastic experience were he not so plainly one of those who hanker for "The pensive Train of Contemplation sweet" but who will not contemplate anything in particular
He is able to rise above this dalliance with the Scarlet Woman

To these dank Walls, in search of true Repose,
Thus erring Zeal and harass'd Minds have flown,
But found no blest Asylum from the Woes
That cleave to Life, and haunt the Bosom's Throne

The monastic system denies both self-love and social love

That Life to sullen Solitude consign'd
For social gen'rous Purposes was giv'n,
No rigid Rules was Penitence enjoin'd,
"To purify her contrite Heart for Heav'n"

According to this imitator of Gray, the monastery also crushes the potential poet and patriot

In these Retreats, where pale-ey'd Spleen retires,
Sloth's dronish Sons, and superstitious Zeal,
Perhaps some Bards quench'd all the Muse's Fires,
And bade the radiant Paths of Fame farewell

But here, how fall'n! how droops the free-born Soul!
Crouching beneath a Pontiff's sacred Frown
Behold, alas! the mystic Beads and Cowl,
Succeed the Patriot's Steel and Laurel Crown

At the close, however, the author tries to achieve a more charitable balance between praise and blame After all, "some antient Virtues" are preserved by these zealots

Here the Heart, dead to Folly's tinsel Joys,
Cleaves to the hallow'd Cross and spiny Crown
Those Hours which Vice in Orgies still employs,
Are wing'd with Praises to their Maker's Throne

With no sense of anticlimax he adds that

Their Gates, unfolding at the Trav'ler's Voice,
Declare some hospitable Genius here,
That bids the weary'd Pilgrim's Heart rejoice,
Pours Pity's Balm, and shares in Mis'ry's Tear

Superstitious as they are, the monks are not unacquainted with the pleasures of sensibility

More wholeheartedly retreatist and primitivistic is the Reverend Richard Gifford (1725-1807),³ whose *Contemplation* (1753) is another imitation of Gray. The following phrases, set down in the manner of Dickens's Mr Jingle, will suffice: "Sable mantle of the Night the early Lark the raptur'd Lay Nature the jolly Shepherd Nature's truer Fire
artless Breasts straw-roof'd Cott rural Ditty tufted Groves
Flow'r-embroider'd Vale Sons of Sloth Folly th' irrevocable
Hour Nature's Charms my Bosom glows the Language of
the Heart the Bards [Druids, says the footnote] uncouth Rhyme,
that Nature prompted Nature's Voice homely Meal Moss-
grown Cell love-sick Swain busy World heart-felt Trans-
port of a Mind at Ease Sons of Mirth hoary-lock'd Tradition
wayward Hags unblest Wizards sportive Elves the sheeted
Ghost smooth-cheek'd Health wrapt in Meditation silent
Church-yards sable Yews holy Musings the weeping Muse
pensive Shepherd meek-ey'd Pity rural Rites Flow'rs
bepearl'd with Tears sweet Innocence" The poem, though not in the least religious, shows what "contemplation" meant to one clergyman of the period

The fascination exerted by Gray upon sentimental parsons is further illustrated by the Reverend John Delap (1725-1812),⁴ who published in 1760 a little book containing two *Elegies*. The first consists of primitivistic nonsense about the happiness of rustics observed on a country walk. The second,

³ A country clergyman educated at Balliol College, Oxford, where he refused to take his M.A. because his Whiggish principles conflicted with the Toryism of the fellows.

⁴ The son of a Lincolnshire gentleman. He was elected a fellow of Magdalene, Cambridge, in 1748. For a time he served as William Mason's curate. He was a pluralist and a writer of bad tragedies.

familiar with the language of latitudinarian Whiggery At times Hawling indulges in swaggering, sneering satire which recalls Savage and predicts Churchill In *Talents misapply'd* he says that he "was bred to Trade" and married very young Suffering from "the Curse of Wit," he forsook the counter for the pen Now he finds himself so poor and shabby that he almost wishes he had become a country parson

Hawling the would-be wit appears in *The Cuckold Self-convicted*, which is hudibrastic both in form and content Ephrim is a Leveller of Cromwell's days

He held it o'er, and o'er again,
Kings were no more than other Men,
That crimson Hoods, and Sleeves of Lawn,
Were both of Antichristian Spawn
No one hath Pow'r above another,
Having one Father, and one Mother
Hence all have equal Right in common,
A Share in all, both Man and Woman

When he is cuckolded by Captain Hothead, his own theories are cast in his teeth But this scorn of dissenting enthusiasm is merely part of a more general anticlericalism displayed in *The Parson's Barn*, a satirical tale relating to tithes Cleros, who has a fat country living, is made to say, with a doubtless unintentional reminiscence of Chaucer

For if (as Logic makes it plain)
The Church's Pow'r is all Men's Gain,
Why then it's obvious to the Letter,
The more Men give the Church, the better

Elsewhere he declares that the worship of a pretty girl whom he observes in church is the true universal religion

Can Worship be more rational,
Ye Christians, Jews, or Turks?
Th' Omnipotent we best behold
I' th' Fairest of his Works^o

But on his softer side Hawling is not without religious aspirations He invokes a

Dread God! who doth all human Thought transcend,
Whence Nature did begin, doth act and end
Tremendous Pow'r, thou great and only Cause,
Why All hath Being, and why Nothing was

^o *The Idol*

He can address the First Cause in a spirit of contrition

Through Folly harden'd, or through Passion sway'd,
That Reason thou hast giv'n I've disobey'd,
In shameless Pride, thy sacred Laws forsook,
Blind to Reproof, and deaf to thy Rebuke

And he calls upon this God for aid

Oh! guide me with a Ray of Heavenly Light,
And lead to what is good, and what is right,

Confirm my Mind in what is truly just,
Which Form to follow, and which Priest to trust ¹⁰

God's answer, or Hawling's, is that neither forms nor priests are very important Human learning, the sceptical poet declares in a Pioresque epistle, sets men to disputing about minute theological points which would be of no moment even if they could be proved Throwing away all such lumber, we should

honest be, sincere and free,
And fix in what all Men agree,
That God the merciful and kind,
Who form'd our Bodies, form'd our Mind,
Whose gen'rous Essence knows no Gain,
Nor works imperfect, or in vain,
Who ne'er from his firm Laws recedes,
Impairs, or peevishly impedes
If we his Will obey,—be just,
Firm is our Confidence and Trust,
That we shall rise in heavenly Climes,
And live and love, to future Times,
And share with him eternal Day,
In Joys shall never know Decay ¹¹

The same doctrine is preached to Marcellus, a young man about to take holy orders The essence of religion is universal benevolence

The true elastic Spirit, social Soul,
Pervades, unites, and uniforms the Whole
Make this your Rule of Action, this attend,
To know your Motive, and foresee its End

¹⁰ *An Invocation to the Supreme Being*

¹¹ *Honesty the best policy*

Marcellus should not worry about "vain, needless Points"

All Mistery, pullulates from sordid Gain,
All Truths are simple, manifest, and plain

Hawling is one of those who regard themselves as Christians because Christ was a good deist

The Holy Jesus recent from above,
Breath'd nought but Peace, Benevolence, and Love,
Uniform Truths, Forgiveness to our Foes,
Nor talk'd one Word of Habits, Forms, and Shows,

Open'd the Well of Life, bid all Men draw,
And form'd for them one universal Law,
Disown'd the World, in Practice and Opinion,
And adverse to his Precepts, held Dominion¹²

That is, in saying "My kingdom is not of this world" Jesus condemned the idea of an authoritative visible Church

The mingling of hardness and softness in Hawling's latitudinarianism is clearly illustrated by two poems which use the Noble Savage as a means of reproaching the superstitions and vices of civilized society.¹³ *The Missionaries A Tale* is mockingly negative. Some Romanist missionaries come before an Indian chief with idiotic claims as to the authority of the Pope and the efficacy of relics which they have brought. The chief, who sees through "The pious Cheat, and holy Joke," insists that such powerful allies be placed in the front rank when his people go to war against a neighboring tribe.

Not devoid of satirical sneers, but much more positive in its sentimental deism, is *A Discourse from King Tomo Chichy to his Nephew Prince Tonahohy*.¹⁴ Among the conventionally primitivistic touches are several observations on religion. The chief refers to "Great Nature's God," or simply "Great Nature," as familiarly as a neoclassicist might speak of "Jove" or "the Gods." The English profess belief in a God of goodness, mercy, and justice, but their learning has obscured their natural virtues.

With Sorrow, and with high Surprize I've seen,
That all their Learning, all their Gaud of Sense,

¹² To Mr —

¹³ See H. N. Fairchild, *The Noble Savage*, especially Chapter XII, "The Noble Savage and the Religion of Nature."

¹⁴ See I, 432, for Thomas Fitzgerald's *Tomo Chichy An Ode*. For an account of this chief-tain's visit to England, which took place in 1743, see B. H. Bissell, *The American Indian in English Literature of the Eighteenth Century*, pp. 63ff.

All their Religion, is but meer Pretence,
Centers within themselves, and swells with Pride,
And what should them unite, does them divide

The Indians, on the other hand, are good deists, they identify self-love with social love, they look through Nature up to Nature's God, and they know their place in the chain of being

Led by one Passion, acted by one Call,
The Publick Good they make the Good of all,
Within short Compass Nature's Wants are brought,
By Need inclin'd, and plain Reflection taught,
From all her Works a Being's understood,
Wise, powerful, beneficent, and good,
The Whole sustaining, who the Whole did raise,
Eternal Theme of Gratitude and Praise
As good to all his Creatures, each Degree,
So in each Station, should his Creatures be,
Just to each other in our whole Affairs,
Our own Wants teaching what is due to theirs

Primitivism finds a more personal expression in *Misanthrope A Satire*, where Hawling condemns "the noxious town," praises beasts as against men, and longs to "Seek the thick Shade," where,

Awfully taught at Day's approach to rise,
And taste the ample Bounty of the Skies,
Peace, Innocence, and Truth, I'll make my Lot,
Forget the World, and be by it forgot

Evidence of Hawling's spiritual ancestry may be gathered from *An Ode to the Bishop of Winchester On his Book of the Sacrament* Benjamin Hoadly,²⁵ the arch-latitudinarian and foe of ecclesiasticism, is associated in most minds with his earlier see of Bangor, but in 1734 he became Bishop of Winchester His *Plain Account of the Nature and End of the Sacrament* was an extremely liberal and Low Church rejoinder to Waterland's High Church treatise on the same subject Hawling describes Hoadly as a John the Baptist of the Second Coming His book is a deathblow to Rome

No more shall Superstition reign,
Nor Antichrist enslave the Earth,
Grim Persecution flies the Plain,
The coming of his second Birth

²⁵ See the Index of Names of Vol I

Ye Wretches form'd for wicked Deeds,
 Your Guilt of Pride, and Pow'r is past,
 Exalted Vengeance now succeeds,
 This Day, O Rome! this Day's thy last!

The poet's confidence on this point is almost as excessive as Swinburne's "Thou art smitten, O God, thou art smitten!"

To judge from this poem, Hawling would wish to be regarded as a broadly rational Christian. On the whole, however, he must be classified as a deist in whom, as usual, negative and positive elements are mingled. Hoadly has led him far from the foul superstitions of popery.

Though a more substantial person than Hawling in the eyes of his contemporaries, the Reverend Robert Potter (1721-1804)¹⁶ has little of interest for us. Almost no religion is discernible in the competent but unexciting verses of this learned clergyman. In more superficial symptoms of romanticism he is fairly rich. Twice he imitates Spenser.¹⁷ In *Kymber*, written chiefly to compliment Sir Armine Woodhouse by reciting the exploits of his ancestors, he follows the form and style of *Lycidas*, but with no apologies to Gray introduces allusions to Welsh heroic legend. He likes the country and shows some ability to describe it in *Holkham*, a topographical piece, and in the Spenserian *Farewell Hymne to the Country*.

The latter poem derives a religious mood from the song of the nightingale

She, soft musician, thro' th' enchanted dale
 Pours dainty dittied warblings, to delight
 The stillness of the night
 'Tis sacred thus to tread the dewy glade,
 In the calm solitude of that still hour
 To nature's God the grateful soul to pour
 Or in the silvery shine, or doubtful shade
 By quivering branches made
 Rapt with the awful thought I cease to sing,
 Nor hills, nor dales, nor woods, nor fountains ring

¹⁶ After graduating from Emmanuel College, Cambridge, he had a successful career as clergyman and schoolmaster. His translation of Aeschylus was admired not only in its own day but throughout the nineteenth century. He also successfully translated Sophocles and Euripides, wrote *An Inquiry into some Passages in Dr Johnson's Lives of the Poets* and *Observations on the Poor Laws*, and published two sermons. His *Poems* appeared in 1774, but he was writing verse at the age of twenty and all his more substantial pieces had been separately published by 1760.

¹⁷ *An Imitation of Spenser* and *A Farewell Hymne to the Country Attempted in the Manner of Spenser's Epithalamion*.

Did Keats, who loved both Spenser and the nightingale, come upon this poem?

Potter values rural retirement largely because it provides an opportunity for quietly rational pleasures. In the "sequester'd bow'r" the frivolous may learn to think, and reason as they ought,

No more they wanton ask the painted toy,
True solid pleasures realize their joy,
They find that happiness in reason lies,
Reason, that makes us, and that keeps us wise

Since in "the calm garden" we can think our own thoughts, retirement is closely associated with freedom, which

Will join the walk, and breathe into the breast
The sweet complacency of a mind at rest,
Whence purer reason, heighten'd wisdom flow,
An Hoadly's calmness, or a Seraph's glow

In Potter Hoadleian calmness is dominant, but there are times when he essays the seraphic

Still let me raise the verse, and point the road,
That leads thro' nature up to nature's God
The heighten'd theme requires a stronger wing,
"The God, the God, the vocal vallies ring,"
On ev'ry mountain we confess his pow'r,
In ev'ry bush the still small voice adore²⁸

The poet, however, spurns a retirement of selfish inactivity. At *Holkham*, seat of the Earl of Leicester, virtue is

No cold recluse self-cavern'd in a cell,
Active and warm she breathes a nobler part,
Glow's in the breast, and opens all the heart,
To gen'rous deeds she fires th' impassion'd mind
The substitute of heav'n to bless mankind

She to yon alms-house, bosom'd in the grove,
From toil and care bids age and want remove,
There the tir'd eve of labour'd life to rest,
Fed by her hand, and by her bounty blest

An almshouse in a grove provides a delightful reconciliation of active and contemplative sentimentalism

²⁸ *Retirement: An Epistle To the Rev. Dr. Hurd*

James Cawthorn (1719-1761)³⁰ is a rather old-fashioned writer whose work is unrewarding to the prospector for preromantic gold *The Perjured Lover* (Sheffield, 1736), his first published poem, was based on the primitivistic story of Inkle and Yarico, but it has sunk from sight. The happiness of peasants makes him think of the Golden Age,³¹ and he alludes with friendly jocularly to Robin Hood and Chevy Chase. With a few such trivial exceptions, his writing is thoroughly neoclassical. Never very well and seldom very badly, he follows Pope in serious ethical poems and Prior in light octosyllabic epistles.

The only traces of Christianity in Cawthorn's work are dramatically motivated, for they appear in the Ovidian—and Popian—epistles, *Lady Jane Grey to Lord Guilford Dudley* and *Abelard to Eloisa*. Lady Jane of course writes as a devout Protestant, and Abelard is torn by the obvious conflict. In his stuffy way, Chalmers is correct in saying that "Cawthorn's Abelard vibrates so often between passion and penitence, that he seems to be quibbling with his conscience, or stating with mechanical repetition the pros and cons of sensuality and religion, and where Pope has failed in delicacy of allusion to Abelard's misfortune, Cawthorn has yet more frequently failed, by more frequently recurring to a subject which no language can render decent."³² Yet as an imitation of an imitation of religious feeling *Abelard to Eloisa* is a clever performance.

See, while Devotion's ever melting strain
Pours the loud organ through the trembling fane,
Yon pious maids each earthly wish disown,
Kiss the dread cross, and crowd upon the throne
O let thy soul the sacred charge attend,
Their warmths inspire, and their virtues mend
Teach every breast from every hymn to steal
The cherub's meekness, and the seraph's zeal,
To rise to rapture, to dissolve away
In dreams of Heav'n, and lead thyself the way,
Till all the glories of the blest abide
Blaze on the scene, and every thought is God

³⁰ The son of a Sheffield upholsterer and cabinet maker. He attended Clare Hall, Cambridge, but did not take his degree. Chalmers credits him with an M.A. from "some northern university." He took holy orders but never held a cure. After serving as usher in several schools, he was headmaster at Tunbridge from 1743 to the end of his life. His collected poems appeared posthumously in 1771.

³¹ *The Equality of Human Conditions*

³² *English Poets*, XIV, 231

When Cawthorn writes in his own person, however, these vicarious raptures disappear. His real religion may be studied in six ethical essays, most if not all of which were designed to be read on visitation days at Tunbridge School. To his students and their bourgeois parents, to delegates from the Worshipful Company of Skinners—the patrons of the institution—this clerical schoolmaster and upholsterer's son expounded the religion of taste. The scene suggests the extent to which, in the 1740's, Shaftesbury's aristocratic ethics had been absorbed by the middle classes.

The "cosmic harmony and universal benevolence" side of Shaftesbury is of small interest to Cawthorn. What he likes is the mingling of Stoicism and Epicureanism with a dash of Platonism in a sort of ethical connoisseurship. Happiness he seems to identify with pleasure, and "The sphere of pleasure is the sphere of man."²² God wants pleasure for all of us.

Impious it were to think th' Eternal Mind
Is but the scourge and tyrant of mankind
Sure he who gives us sunshine, dew, and show'r,
The vine ambrosial, and the blooming flow'r,
Whose own bright image lives on man imprest,
Meant that each being should be wise and blest,
And taught each instinct in his heart enshrin'd
To feel for bliss, to search it, and to find.²³

Hence the drive of the passions toward "bliss" is a reflection of the divine will, a stirring of something godlike within ourselves.

In every human breast there lives enshrin'd
Some atom pregnant with th' ethereal mind,
Some plastic power, some intellectual ray,
Some genial sunbeam from the source of day,
Something that, warm and restless to aspire,
Works the young heart, and sets the soul on fire,
And bids us all our inborn pow'rs employ
To catch the phantom of ideal joy.²⁴

But this Platonism gives place to Stoicism, for although

The passions then all human virtue give,
Fill up the soul, and lend her strength to live,

we are inconsistently informed that the passions must be regulated and harmonized by virtue. And virtue—here Platonism returns hand in hand

²² *The Regulation of the Passions the Source of Human Happiness*

²³ *Life Unhappy, Because We Use It Improperly*

²⁴ *The Regulation of the Passions*

with Epicureanism—is a matter of good taste²⁶ Upon the proper development of this faculty depends all our happiness

Each scene of life, or open or confin'd,
Alike congenial to its kindred mind,
Alike ordain'd by Heav'n to charm or please
The man of spirit and the man of ease,
Just as our taste is better or is worse,
Becomes a blessing, or becomes a curse²⁶

Taste is hazily but rapturously defined as

the pure sunshine of a soul divine,
The full perfection of each mental pow'r—
'Tis sense, 'tis Nature, and 'tis something more

But this delightful *je ne sais quoi* must be distinguished from genius, which,

Wild and impetuous, high as Heav'n aspires,
All science animates, all virtue fires,
Creates ideal worlds, and there convenes
Aerial forms, and visionary scenes
But Taste corrects, by one ethereal touch,
What seems too little, and what seems too much,
Marks the fine point where each consenting part
Slides into beauty with the ease of art,
This bids to rise, and that with grace to fall,
And bounds, unites, refines, and heightens all²⁷

Although Cawthorn has an uneasy reverence for genius, he is content to ground his system upon the more orderly and measured faculty of taste The strongly romantic potentialities of his thought are undeveloped he is far too classical to preach the doctrine of creative imagination He offers, as he says, a "cool philosophy of head and heart" Herein, of course, he is closer to the real Shaftesbury than more fervidly sentimental followers of that philosopher

In the last analysis, then, that regulation of the passions which conduces to virtuous pleasure is comparable to the nice adjustment of colors in painting Spagnoletti goes in for "fictitious horrors" Albano is too bright and rich,

²⁶ *Ibid*

²⁸ *Life Unhappy, Because We Use It Improperly*

²⁷ *Of Taste* Observe that the last line paraphrases Pope's description of God in the *Essay on Man*

while Carlo is too tame Rembrandt achieves the perfect balance Let us try to live as he paints

Form all thy life with all his warmth divine,
Great as his plan, and faultless as his line,
Let all thy passions, like his colours, play,
Strong without harshness, without glaring gay
Contrast them, curb them, spread them, or confine,
Ennoble these, and those forbid to shine,

So shalt thou live as Heav'n itself design'd,
Each pulse congenial with th' informing mind,
Each action station'd in its proper place,
Each virtue blooming with its native grace,
Each passion vig'rous to its just degree,
And the fair whole a perfect symmetry²⁸

One wonders how the Worshipful Company of Skinners responded to these elegant notions Probably, except for a few Evangelicals who may have been present, they supposed that the Reverend Mr Cawthorn was giving them good Christian doctrine

In this as well as in the preceding volume, we have had occasion to observe that the latitudinarianism of the Scotch "Moderates" provided a fertile soil for sentimental fruits It is not surprising, therefore, that several Caledonians deserve inclusion in the present chapter The son of a poor farmer and himself a farmer for some years, William Wilkie (1721-1772) became a minister of the Kirk on leaving the University of Edinburgh, but he was temperamentally unfitted for parochial cares He found his proper niche in 1759 when he was appointed Professor of Natural Philosophy at St Andrews, for he was well versed in science and an effective teacher He is remembered also as a piquantly eccentric character—stingy, slovenly, learned, brilliant in conversation, very absent-minded Such men as Hume, Robertson, and Adam Smith were among his friends

Apart from the *Epigoniad* (1757), which won him the title of "the Scottish Homer," Wilkie has left us only a handful of poems *A Dream In the Manner of Spenser* is of some interest not only because of its model but because it elevates simple nature above art In *A Dialogue* he praises

Ossian's deathless strains,
Of high heroic times the sole remains,
Strains which display perfections to our view,
Which polish'd Greece and Italy ne'er knew

²⁸ *The Regulation of the Passions* In *Of Taste* Handel's music is used in a similar analogy

In the preface to the *Epigoniad*, Wilkie laboriously defends his use of Greek mythology in a Greek epic. He is anxious both to confute Glover, who had eschewed supernatural machinery in *Leonidas*, and to placate "some readers, who will think it indecent for a Christian to write in such a manner as to suppose the truth of a Heathen religion." His arguments are merely technical except for a curious attempt to show that, since epic characters should not be morally perfect, the use of Christian machinery in such a poem "would be to bring down the infinite wisdom of God to the level of human folly, and to make him altogether such an one as ourselves." Even as late as 1757, a Scotch poet would do well to consider the sensibilities of his pious countrymen.

But despite this tenderness for the true faith, one finds hardly a trace of religious feeling in Wilkie's poems. Even the *Fables*—heavy-footed imitations of Gay—contain only one exception. A young atheist, a man of straw if ever there was one, argues that the existence of night, with all its inconveniences and dangers, illustrates the planless confusion of the universe. The hermit with whom he is debating leaps upon his prey:

Conceive a sun in every star,
Round which unnumber'd planets roll,
While comets shoot athwart the whole
From system still to system ranging,
Their various benefits exchanging,
And shaking from their flaming hair
The things most needed everywhere
Explore this glorious scene, and say
That night discovers less than day,
That 'tis quite useless, and a sign
That chance disposes, not design
Who'er maintains it, I'll pronounce
Him either mad, or else a dunce
For reason, though 'tis far from strong,
Will soon find out that nothing's wrong,
From signs and evidences clear
Of wise contrivance every where.²⁰

The argument is appropriate for a professor of natural philosophy. Wilkie, however, is neither religious nor poetic enough to respond deeply to his Newtonianism. His planets have "flaming hair," but their functions amount to a sort of cosmic trade.

²⁰ *The Rake and the Hermit*

John Cunningham (1729-1773) was born in Dublin, but his father (a cooper) and his mother were the children of Scotch parents. It was chiefly in Scotland that this amiable, unambitious, easy-going fellow led the life of a strolling actor. In 1747 his farce, *Love in a Mist*, had some success in Dublin, but otherwise his career was shabby and obscure. He died insane. His verses are execrable when he tries to be weighty, but the vein of simple lyricism which predominates in his work is rather pleasing. Although he avoids dialect, he is influenced by Scotch folk song.

At ev'ry fond kiss that with freedom he takes,
My heart may rebound if it will,
There's something so sweet in the bustle it makes,
I'll die ere I bid it lie still⁸⁰

His idols are Allan Ramsay, Gray, and Shenstone. He has a quick eye for rural detail and shows a good deal of naturalistic feeling with little or no explicit philosophizing.

In *The Contemplatist A Night Piece* he indulges in pensive melancholy with a mild touch of graveyardism. There are signs of close observation, but everything that he sees is soon transformed into a platitudinous symbol. The bleat of a lost lamb makes him think of a seduced virgin, and

A raven, from some greedy vault,
Amid that cloister'd gloom,
Bids me, and 'tis a solemn thought,
Reflect upon the tomb

He turns from Parnell to Gray in *An Elegy on a Pile of Ruins*, where a mouldering abbey takes the place of the churchyard.

There Contemplation, to the crowd unknown,
Her attitude compos'd, and aspect sweet!
Sits musing on a monumental stone,
And points to the MEMENTO at her feet

His appreciation of the scene is unmingled with any scorn of gloomy zeal and superstitious sloth.

Where the mild sun, through saint-encypher'd glass,
Illum'd with mellow light yon dusky aisle,
Many rapt hours might Meditation pass,
Slow moving 'twixt the pillars of the pile!

⁸⁰ *The Sycamore Shade A Ballad*

And Piety, with mystic-meaning beads,
 Bowing to saints on every side inurn'd,
 Trod oft the solitary path that leads
 Where now the sacred altar lies o'eturn'd!

But Cunningham is no precursor of the Oxford Movement. Although something in the atmosphere of Catholic devotion appeals to his fancy, he is more at home in that purer shrine of benevolism, the masonic hall. He delivers *A Eulogium on Masonry*

To works of art her merit's not confin'd,
 She regulates the morals, squares the mind,

On Virtue's tablets marks each sacred rule,
 And forms her lodge an universal school,
 Where Nature's mystic laws unfolded stand,
 And Sense and Science, join'd, go hand in hand
 O! may her social rules instructive spread,
 Till Truth erect her long-neglected head,

Till all the peopled world her laws approve,
 And the whole human race be bound in brother's love

The immortality vouchsafed to even the faintest stars in the constellation of Ursa Major has preserved the memory of James Grainger (1721?-1766)⁸¹. Though usually a man of common-sense realism, he has his moments of sensibility. *Solitude: An Ode* embodies a familiar conflict between two types of sentimentalism. It begins as a standardized retirement poem in the *Il Penseroso* tradition

Sage Reflection bent with years,
 Conscious Virtue void of fears,
 Muffled Silence, wood-nymph shy,
 Meditation's piercing eye,
 Halcyon Peace on moss reclin'd,
 Retrospect that scans the mind,
 Rapt earth-gazing Revery,
 Blushing artless Modesty,

⁸¹ He was born in the Lowland Scotch village of Dunse, but his father was a Cumberland man who had lost his money in mining speculations. After some experience as an army surgeon Grainger entered civilian practise in London. There he won the friendship of Johnson and his circle but was unsuccessful in his profession. Finally he emigrated to the West Indies, married a wealthy planter's daughter, and flourished greatly.

Health that snuffs the morning air,
 Full-ey'd Truth with bosom bare,
 Inspiration, Nature's child,
 Seek the solitary wild

Observe that Grainger's *Revery* looks down, not up

But after much more to the same purpose he changes his tone, abandoning the octosyllabics of fancy for the heroic couplets of reason. Solitude herself addresses the poet

Youth, you're mistaken, if you think to find
 In shades a med'cine for a troubled mind

On the contrary, he will find Grief, Inaction, Frenzy, and Superstition. The wish to withdraw from society is "impious," for

God never made an independent man,
 'Twould jar the concord of his general plan,

the "great end" of which is "the general good." Man is instinctively impelled to cooperate with the divine scheme

For know, the Maker on the human breast
 A sense of kindred, country, man, imprest,
 And social life to better, aid, adorn,
 With proper faculties each mortal's born

And be this maxim graven on thy mind,
 The height of virtue is to serve mankind

Although Grainger's diploma piece, *The Sugar-Cane*, sticks pretty closely to the subject, its utilitarianism is sometimes linked to this doctrine of cosmic benevolence

Thus all depends on all, so God ordains
 Then let not man for little selfish ends,
 (Britain, remember this important truth!)
 Presume the principle to counteract
 Of universal love, for God is love,
 And wide creation shares alike his care ²²

This truth is somewhat obscured by the destructiveness of tropical storms. Grainger asks why God is particularly hard on Antigua in this respect, but leaves the question unanswered

At least in theory, Grainger is a warm humanitarian

Oh, did the tender Muse possess the power,
 Which monarchs have, and monarchs yet abuse,

²² Book I

'Twould be the fond ambition of her soul
 To quell tyrannic sway, knock off the chains
 Of heart debasing slavery, give to man,
 Of every colour and of every clime,
 Freedom, which stamps him image of his God

Lacking this power, however, the Muse may as well concern herself with more immediate problems concerning the care and management of slaves

Say, shall the Muse the various ills recount,
 Which Negro-nations feel? Shall she describe
 The worm that subtly winds into their flesh,
 All as they bathe them in their native streams? ⁸⁸

It is not easy for Grainger to harmonize the planter and the poet. Even if his sentimental yearnings were more deeply genuine, he would be too busy to climb mountains in order to worship Nature's God

Ah, when will cares,
 The cares of fortune, less my minutes claim?
 Then, with what joy, what energy of soul,
 Will I not climb yon mountain's airiest brow!
 The dawn, the burning noon, the setting Sun,
 The midnight-hour, shall hear my constant vows
 To Nature, see me prostrate at her shrine ⁸⁴

But the cares of fortune are by no means insupportable, and Grainger cheerfully devotes his energy of soul to such questions as

Of composts shall the Muse descend to sing,
 Nor soil her heavenly plumes? ⁸⁵

He does not hesitate to take the risk

A Lanarkshire farm lad who sought education as a steppingstone to wealth, James Graeme (1748-1772) ⁸⁶ is disappointed and confused by the impractical abstractions of the Edinburgh curriculum. He finds the university

All mere confusion, altogether hurl'd,
 One dreary waste, one vast ideal world!

⁸⁸ Book IV

⁸⁴ Book III

⁸⁵ Book I

⁸⁶ He entered the University of Edinburgh in 1767. In 1769 he held a bursary at St. Andrews but resigned and returned to Edinburgh in the following year to study theology. He served as tutor to the sons of a Lanarkshire gentleman in 1771. A friend published his poems in the year following his death, vainly hoping 'that this collection will furnish no displeasing entertainment to the reader of sensibility.'

Where uproar rules, and do you what you will,
 Uproar has rul'd it, and will rule it still
 Victorious Ergo, daring consequence,
 Will ever be a match for common sense!

"Mistrust your feelings, reason bids you, do",—
 But, gentlemen, indeed I cannot now,
 For after all your Ergo's, look you there!
 My hat is greasy, and my coat is bare³⁷

There may be no money in writing poetry, but it affords a refuge from
 "Locke! Malebranche! Hume! abstractions thrice abstract"

The young author's *Poems on Several Occasions* (1773) display no great promise. The volume is devoted chiefly to fifty elegies—all but two of them mawkish love elegies imitating Tibullus through Hammond. But if Hammond's influence is sufficient to explain the predominance of the abab⁵ stanza, Gray's influence is also plainly at work. A rural setting is assumed and often described, twilight churchyards, ghosts, mournful yews, and ploughmen are frequently introduced as stage properties. Among the other poems one notices two boyishly indecorous sallies,³⁸ an imitation of *Eloisa to Abelard*,³⁹ a broadsidish *Elegiac Ballad* in which a seduced maiden bewails her fate and another ballad, more or less Ossianic in inspiration, entitled *Rona*, a Georgic on *Curling*, and a pseudo-contemplative *Night-Piece*.

His greensickness may not be altogether fictitious, for in *To Damon* he wishes that he might cease to

Admire a virgin whom I see no more,
 Hills rise between us, and deep waters roar,
 And worse than streams and mountains still divide,
 The daughter's piety, and the father's pride

Perhaps the rebellious theology student has shocked his Gretchen by such ideas as are found in his very free *Paraphrase on Some Verses of Ecclesiastes*

Why buds the olive, and why grows the vine?
 To glad our hearts, and make our faces shine
 In vain before us has th' Almighty plac'd
 Delicious viands, if we dare not taste,
 If 'tis damnation to admire the fair,
 Why has he deck'd them with such curious care?

Look, rev'rend dotards! say, has he devis'd

³⁷ *The Student A Fragment*

³⁸ *The Unsuccessful Caprice* and *To a Fly*

³⁹ *To Miss —*

Such striking beauties but to be despis'd?
 Say, for their ruin has he giv'n to all
 Th' instinctive impulse, and the vig'rous call?

The thought slanders the divine beneficence In lines which predict Shelley's
Love's Philosophy Graeme argues

Whate'er in water, air, or earth we see,
 In life rejoices, why not therefore we?
 Will God to man what all enjoy deny?
 Has God been more indulgent to a fly?

In short,

Make merry with thy friends, and boldly join
 The joys of women, and the joys of wine,
Enjoy thyself, by no false terrors aw'd,
 The voice of Nature is the voice of God

Here the cult of sentiment is rather too transparently employ'd to support
 Graeme's youthful sensuality A less patently spurious rationalization of the
 same impulse is achieved in his *Hymn, to the Eternal Mind* God, addressed
 as "Source of happiness! whate'er thy name," is the absolute master of our
 lives,

But something still is ours, and only ours,
 A moral nature, grac'd with moral pow'rs,
 The perfect gift, unlimited and free,
 Without reserve of service, or of fee

This is the doctrine of free grace translated into Shaftesburian terms—a
 kind of sentimental antinomianism The gift, he continues, was not

given but to bind
 In everlasting fetters all mankind!
 To bind us o'er to debts we ne'er could pay,
 And for our torment cheat us into *day*!

Possessing free will, we may neglect or abuse our moral sense God, however,
 , will make allowance for our weakness

But hail, Eternal Essence, ever hail!
 Tho' vice now triumph, passion now prevail,
 Tho' all should err, yet all are sure to find
 In thee a father, and in thee a friend!
 A friend to overlook the mortal part,
 The crimes, the follies, foreign to the heart

A queer jumble of natural sinfulness and natural goodness! Graeme's libertine sentimentalism has not completely emerged from its chrysalis of Calvinism. He manages to believe, however, that one's conduct does not greatly matter so long as one possesses a good heart. It is the ethics of *Tom Jones*.

Recrossing the border, we find in Hugh Downman (1740-1809)⁴⁰ quite literally a man of "ode, and elegy, and sonnet." His mediocre efforts to emulate Gray, Collins, Shenstone, and the Wartons may be taken for granted. Of religious thought or feeling there is hardly a sign. He is noteworthy only for his very highfalutin conception of the poet's rights and powers.

Who with ungovern'd tongue will blame
The verse th' eternal Muse inspires?
The soul-illuminating flame,
Kindled at heaven's own sacred fires?
Who but the wretch of narrow mind,
Whose sentiments were ne'er refin'd
From the vile dross whose base alloy
Condemns him still to plod along
But one degree above the bestial throng,
Unconscious of each nobler source of joy?⁴¹

This bardic superciliousness is explained in the Spenserian imitation, *The Land of the Muses*, where it is said of Fancy, who never braids her golden hair, that,

if she will'd, new worldes of her own
She would create, and them empeople too,
And in the midst upbuild her splendid throne,
Exactng from her subjects homage due
Tho in a moment's space these worldes new,
And each thing in them would annihilate,
Her pregnant will she ever would pursue,
For she alone, most wond'rous to relate,
Except high-reigning God, was uncontroul'd by fate

⁴⁰ He was born in Exeter and was educated at Balliol, Oxford. Though ordained in 1763, he studied medicine at Edinburgh and became a physician in his native city. Ill health handicapped him in his profession, but according to *DNB* he enjoyed "the reputation of an able and humane physician and a most amiable man." My remarks about him are based upon *The Land of the Muses: A Poem In the Manner of Spenser With Poems on Several Occasions* (Edinburgh, 1768). A few poems separately published later have never been collected, and I have not felt it necessary to assemble them for study.

⁴¹ *An Ode*. The poem is a regular Pindaric.

Have we reached a stage in which poetry itself becomes the poet's religion? The question will be raised again by the work of more important writers

"My Pen hath never been engaged either in Party, or Personality, nor hath written a line that I was conscious could give offence—Its sole object hath been, either to spread to the Imagination, the beauties of Nature, or of Art, or to bring forth in an amiable point of view, those Excellencies which I have found in private Characters, with whom it has been my happiness in life to have been connected, ever aiming in all my Compositions to deduce from them such moral Sentiments as might naturally arise out of the subject before me" In these words George Keate (1729-1797)⁴² dedicates his *Poetical Works* (1781) to the good Dr Heberden The two handsome volumes abound in a heavy and pompous sensibility In a few pages it is impossible to convey an adequate notion of how they reek with virtue, liberty, social love, nature, and so forth He should probably be called a deist, but he may well have thought himself a rational Christian Significantly, he writes of Bishop Hoadly that

Tho' Party-rage his Doctrines loud assail'd,
He wrote for Truth—and in her Cause prevail'd,
And, full of Days and Honor, liv'd to see
Th' enlighten'd Realm by what he taught, more free⁴³

Another hero is his old acquaintance Voltaire, "the Friend of human Kind," who amidst the groves of Ferney

Can range the Vast of Science, unconfin'd,
For distant Flights can wing th' excursive Soul,
Or glance with Lightning's speed from Pole to Pole,
Whether thro' Nature's devious Paths he strays,
Pursues the Planet's course, the Comet's blaze,
Or less advent'rous, quits th' aerial height
To fix on mortal Woes a Mortal's sight⁴⁴

As befits a man of such admirations, Keate detests popery In *Ancient and Modern Rome*, which arises from his travels, he ascribes the decay of ancient

⁴² A member of a good Wiltshire family, he entered the Inner Temple in 1751 and was called to the bar in 1753 He was a poet, artist, naturalist, and antiquary He traveled widely on the continent and became intimately acquainted with Voltaire at Geneva in 1756 He wrote only a few poems after publishing his *Poetical Works* in 1781, but his prose *Account of the Pelew Islands* (1788) was a popular South Seas travel book

⁴³ *To the Memory of Dr John Hoadly, Chancellor of Winchester* John Hoadly was the latitudinarian bishop's son, but the quoted lines allude to the father

⁴⁴ *Ferney An Epistle to Monsr De Voltaire* Disappointingly, the poem is almost wholly devoted to praise of Voltaire's tragedies

Roman liberty to "superstition" What troubles him most of all, however, is the hard fate of nuns, which controverts the principle that

Heav'n points out
A flow'ry way to all, nor bids its sons
Tread the hard flint, or shun the joys of life —
Then wherefore, 'midst yon venerable piles
Of pompous ruin, splendid fabrics rise,
And swelling domes?—Why do I hear the voice
Of Superstition bid her altars blaze?
And see her beckon to the cloyster'd cell
The blooming maid?—Alike the pride of youth,
The blush of beauty yield, their blossoms crop'd
Ere we can say they flourish'd!

O blind, to think their safety lies in flight!
Or that the steady foot of Virtue fears
To tread the haunts of man!

In another poem Lady Jane Grey rejects "th' accursed purpose" of the priest who offers her mercy at the price of apostasy⁴⁵

To this traveler Switzerland is as admirable as Rome is detestable In the Alps he finds what Coleridge and other romantics were to find—scenery, simplicity, liberty⁴⁶ Here the pleasures of retirement reach their apogee

Amidst these Scenes stupendous, where the Soul
Feels all her faculties in wonder lost,
Contemplative, I'll roam thro' winding walks
Of shadowy Pines that court the breeze, and hear
The Torrent down its stony channel sweep
With terror-striking roar nor would I fail
At dewy Eve to wander, when the Sun
To his pale Sister's milder rule resigns
The cloudless Skies

This tranquil hour
This awful silence, Meditation's due,
Forbids the mind to view with careless eye
Creations's works, or uninstructed gaze⁴⁷

⁴⁵ *An Epistle from Lady Jane Gray [sic] to Lord Gualford Dudley* Keate was a descendant of Catherine Seymour, Lady Jane's sister

⁴⁶ See *The Alps, The Helvetiad, and Verses, Occasioned by Visiting in 1756, a small Chapel Erected to the Memory of the Famous William Tell*

⁴⁷ *The Alps*

On the other hand the hardy, virtuous, liberty-loving Swiss peasants satisfy the more active social impulses of the man of feeling. At Geneva in 1756, Keate planned an epic on the historic fourteenth-century revolt of the cantons. He showed his argument to Voltaire, to whom he had "constant access" at this time. The Sage of Ferney, however, won the gratitude of posterity by advising Keate to deal with subjects "that might more engage the public attention."⁴⁸ Hence only one book of *The Helvetiad*—the third in Keate's original scheme—was ever written. It describes the first conference of the three rebel leaders.

Thus plainly reason'd they—their maxims drawn
From Nature's artless volume, read by minds
Which Virtue had inform'd—Compar'd to this,
How vain the idle sophistry of schools!
The pride of pedantry, or Learning's boast!

These stern mountaineers have tender hearts, and possess by instinct the doctrines of benevolism. Werner is almost overcome by his own oration on liberty.

Here paus'd the Patriot, for adown his cheek
Quick roll'd th' involuntary tear, and stopp'd
His falt'ring voice, it was the tribute paid
By Sensibility to Social Love!—
Not for himself he wept, no private loss
His gen'rous mind embrac'd a suff'ring land
And unborn generations—Tears like these
How rarely see we now!—Yet howsoe'er
A sordid interest, or selfish views
Mislead an erring world, the human soul
Ne'er shines more bright, than when she feels, and aids
The wretchedness of others!—On such worth
Approving Heav'n looks down, and smiling, bids
Recording angels register the deed!

Despite Keate's disapproval of conventual life, he is sufficiently eclectic in his sentimentalism to devote an elegy to *Netley Abbey*. In the Preface he laments that a later owner "fitted it up for a place of residence, and desecrated the whole, by converting part of the chapel into a kitchen, and other offices." A similar incident, the reader may remember, occasioned a humor-

⁴⁸ Preface to *The Helvetiad*

ously blasphemous poem by Sir Charles Hanbury Williams⁴⁹ But a man of sensibility regards these matters differently For Keate the abbey is

How chang'd, alas! from that rever'd abode
 Grac'd by proud Majesty in ancient days,
 When Monks recluse these sacred pavements trod,
 And taught th' unletter'd World its Maker's praise!

Here pious Beadsmen, from the world retir'd,
 In blissful visions wing'd their souls to Heav'n,
 While future joys their sober transports fir'd,
 They wept their erring days, and were forgiv'n

The monks were not antisocial ascetics, for they knew the joys of active benevolence

No more shall Charity, with sparkling eyes
 And smiles of Welcome, wide unfold the door,
 Where Pity list'ning still to Nature's cries,
 Befriends the Wretched, and relieves the Poor!

Keate is not utterly devoid of positive religion He believes in a personal God and looks toward the great day

When to a Spring Eternal we shall rise,
 And bursting from the Grave, shoot upward to the Skies⁵⁰

To his wife he writes

Let us the Storms of Life with Firmness bear,
 For Storms will rise, and Man was born to feel,
 Fix'd by each Hope on His parental Care,
 Who never wounds but with Design to heal⁵¹

But such traditionally pious notes are submerged in that cult of universal goodwill which pervades his *Ode to Friendship* He addresses James Bruce⁵²

'Tis to a Heart like yours, that feels
 Each joy its sacred fire reveals,
 I consecrate these lines,
 Benevolence alone can know

⁴⁹ See p. 24

⁵⁰ *An Ode Written at Bana in the Spring of 1755* See also *Westminster Abbey*

⁵¹ *To Ardelia, On her Recovery from a long Illness*

⁵² Probably James Bruce (1730-1794), the African traveler, several of whose interests were similar to Keate's

Its influence mild, that social glow
Which ev'ry Sense refines

Connected by this mutual tye,
The World becomes one Family,
Doom'd the same Fate to know,
The gen'rous purpose swells the breast,
And he who makes a Brother blest,
Himself is doubly so

Again one observes the beaming self-indulgence which corrupts the altruism of the period

The contrast between William Whitehead (1715-1785)⁸⁸ and his unrelated namesake Paul⁸⁴ is striking the man of sensibility and the libertine satirist make a strangely assorted pair When William asserts *The Danger of Writing Verse* he might almost be rebuking the wits of Medmenham Abbey⁸⁵

Curs'd be their verse, and blasted all their bays,
Whose sensual lure th' unconscious ear betrays,
Wounds the young breast, ere Virtue spreads her shield,
And takes, not wins, the scarce disputed field

The two Whiteheads, however, are not entirely different, for reliance on impulse is double-edged If Paul has his softer moments, William at times sets up for a wit His long satirical fable, *The Goat's Beard*, observes that women are nowadays too much like men, and men too much like women Jove advises the men to keep their scepticism to themselves

Don't perplex
With specious doubts the weaker sex
Let them enjoy their Tate and Brady's,
Free-thinking is not sport for ladies
Is't not enough *you* read Voltaire,
While sneering valets frizz your hair,

⁸⁸ The son of a Cambridge baker, he was educated at Winchester and at Clare Hall, Cambridge In 1757 he became poet laureate He was also a playwright and contributed a few essays to *The World* Mason was his friend and biographer, Churchill his enemy He seems to have been an amiable, harmless, trivial man

⁸⁴ See p 29

⁸⁵ Since the poem is dated 1741, the remark is not to be taken literally

Why must the fair be made the wise
Partakers of your mysteries?

Why in soft bosoms make a riot?
Can't ye be d-mn'd yourselves in quiet?

Although foppish unbelief is satirized, piety does not fare much better Jove insists that

whate'er you say, or sing,
Religion is a serious thing
At least to *me*, you will allow,
A deity, it must be so

It is less serious to William Whitehead, although at one time he thought of taking orders He hopes that his intimacy with an unnamed friend may continue,

Whether in wide-spread scarf, and rustling gown,
My borrow'd rhet'ric soothes the saints in town,
Or makes in country pews soft matrons weep,
Gay damsels smile, and tir'd churchwardens sleep⁸⁶

But although Whitehead can giggle politely at institutional religion, in his most characteristic poems he is a tenderly earnest champion of the active or "social" type of sentimentalism Less waveringly than most of his contemporaries, he opposes retirement The monks of a French monastery are lectured on this point⁸⁷ The same muscular gospel is preached to his indolent friend Mason

Go then, go feel with glad surprise
New bliss from new attentions rise,
Till, happier in thy wider sphere,
Thou quit thy darling schemes of ease,
Nay, glowing in the full career,
Ev'n wish thy virtuous labours more,
Nor till the toilsome day is o'er
Expect the night of peace⁸⁸

For dramatic effect, Whitehead even exhorts himself on this theme In *The Enthusiast*, the beauty of the solitary grove seduces him into exclaiming

'Tis here, divine Philosophy,
Thou deign'st to fix thy throne!

⁸⁶ *Fragment of a Poem Written About the Time He Intended to Take Orders* I do not know when he was considering this step—probably about 1743, when he received his M A

⁸⁷ *Elegy I Written at the Convent of Haut Villers in Champagne, 1754*

⁸⁸ *To Mr Mason*

Here Contemplation points the road
Through Nature's charms to Nature's God!
These, these, are joys alone!

But these raptures are interrupted by a reproving voice

Art thou not man? and dar'st thou find
A bliss which leans not to mankind?
Presumptuous thought, and vain!
Each bliss unshar'd is unenjoy'd,
Each power is weak, unless employ'd
Some social good to gain

But solitary pleasures may be enjoyed when contemplation of divine creativeness inspires kindred impulses in the human mind. The following lines interestingly develop the sentimental implications of a famous passage in *Windsor Forest*

Happy the man whom these amusive walks,
These waking dreams delight! no cares molest
His vacant bosom Solitude itself
But opens to his keener view new worlds,
Worlds of his own from every genuine scene
Of Nature's varying hand his active mind
Takes fire at once, and his full soul o'erflows
With Heaven's own bounteous joy, he too creates,
And with new beings peoples earth and air,
And ocean's deep domain⁸⁹

Whitehead's energy worship, then, is related to a kind of aesthetic transcendentalism. To be truly contemplative is to be active, and to be truly active is to be imaginatively creative, like God. Such is the religion of the man who was poet laureate of England from 1757 to 1785.

More complex and inconsistent in his sentimentalism is the Reverend John Langhorne (1735-1779),⁹⁰ who combined the career of a secular man of letters with that of a popular preacher and writer in prose on religious subjects. Although completely representative of the cult of sentiment, even in his poetry he displays a few chemical traces of Christianity. But for him there is

⁸⁹ *An Hymn to the Nymph of Bristol Spring*

⁹⁰ Even a condensed recital of his complicated life would require an unjustifiable amount of space. The reader may see *DNB* or the memoir in Volume XVI of Chalmers. His brother William, with whom he translated Plutarch, wrote no poetry except Scripture-paraphrases.

no real difference between Christianity and benevolism, and "Jesus wept" merely suggests the tear of sensibility

O, for that sympathetic glow
Which taught the holy tear to flow,
When the prophetic eye survey'd
Sion in future ashes laid,
Or, rais'd to Heav'n, implor'd the bread
That thousands in the desert fed!
Or when the heart o'er Friendship's grave
Sigh'd,—and forgot its power to save—

Life, fill'd with grief's distressful train,
For ever asks the tear humane ⁶¹

In his *Hymn to the Eternal Providence*, the God to whom he pledges submission and trust seems primarily the God of the natural revelation

Life of the world, Immortal Mind,
Father of all the human kind!
Whose boundless eye that knows no rest,
Intent on Nature's ample breast,
Explores the space of earth and skies,
And sees eternal incense rise!

A softer man than Whitehead, Langhorne is more inclined to shun the world for the solace of "simple" nature. He is something of a primitivist and frequently expresses a grudge against book learning

Has fair Philosophy thy love?
Away! she lives in yonder grove
If the sweet Muse thy pleasure gives,—
With her in yonder grove she lives
And if Religion claims thy care,
Religion, fled from books, is there
For first from Nature's works we drew
Our knowledge, and our virtue too ⁶²

But on such questions Langhorne is not easily pinned down. In *Studley Park*, a better than average topographical piece, he thinks that the noblest fruits of retirement depend upon knowledge and poetic genius. That man is

More amply blest, if gloriously retir'd,
With learning charm'd, and with the Muses fir'd,
Who nobly dares with philosophic eye,

⁶¹ *Hymn to Humanity*

⁶² *Inscription on the Door of a Study*

Through full creation's bounded orbs to fly,
 Pleas'd, in their well-form'd systems still to find
 The matchless wisdom of th' immortal mind
 Still charm'd, in Nature's various plan, to trace
 His boundless love and all-supporting grace

Here, to be sure, he is both imitating *Windsor Forest* and flattering the owner of the estate⁶³

The suggestion of Christianity in the phrase "all-supporting grace" is perhaps strengthened by a later passage in which, rambling over the estate at night, he comes upon a chapel

In awful scenes retir'd, where gloomy Night
 Still broods, unbanish'd by returning light,

Musing along the lonely shades I roam
 'Till beauteous rises a devoted dome
 Thy fane, seraphic Piety! low plac'd
 In sable glooms, by deep'ning woods embrac'd

The sacred solitude, the lone recess,
 An awful pleasure on my soul impress
 Raptures divine through all my bosom glow,
 The bliss alone immortal beings know

But the chapel does no more than add a fillip to pseudoreligious feelings which have already been aroused by the nocturnal scene. The shrine of sensibility, it is merely the focal point of an affecting *Salvator Rosa* landscape.

Langhorne's retreatism, however, sometimes gives him a furtive sympathy for the contemplative aspect of Catholic religious life. Witness the simile which opens his fable of *The Sun-Flower and the Ivy*

As duteous to the place of prayer,
 Within the convent's lonely walls,
 The holy sisters still repair,
 What time the rosy morning calls

So fair, each morn, so full of grace,
 Within their little garden rear'd,
 The flower of Phoebus turn'd her face
 To meet the power she lov'd and fear'd⁶⁴

⁶³ "It appears that he had some expectations from the possessor of this beautiful place, which were not gratified" (Chalmers, XVI, 407)

⁶⁴ Compare—and contrast—Blake

Apparently with the poet's approval, *The Duchess of Mazarine, On Her Retiring Into a Convent*, bids a half-wistful but pious farewell to the world. The poem, however, is too obviously imitative of *Eloisa to Abelard* to be taken very seriously. And the sunflower nun is balanced by a hermit who is severely condemned

Though Nature lent him powers to aid
The moral cause, the mutual weal,
Those powers he sunk in this dim shade,
The desp'rate suicide of zeal⁶⁸

As we already know, Langhorne attacked enthusiasm in prose,⁶⁸ he was not the man to encourage it in poetry.

In one of his most ambitious efforts, *The Enlargement of the Mind*, Langhorne leaves the humble cot to become the champion of social love and active beneficence. The poem follows Hartley in describing the growth of ideas from sense impressions as if the process implied not merely psychological but moral "enlargement." One thinks of the analogous perversion of Darwinism by nineteenth-century liberal apologetics. Langhorne begins with a fine latitudinarian or deistic flourish

Where is the man, who, prodigal of mind,
In one wide wish embraces human kind?
All pride of sects, all party zeal above,
Whose priest is Reason, and whose god is Love,
Fair Nature's friend, a foe to fraud and art—
Where is the man so welcome to my heart?

The man is General Craufurd, to whom the poem is addressed, and he may be found on his estate, Belvidere, where the happy poet is writing these lines.

A narrow outlook, either in saint or atheist, is a grave fault

'Twas thus St Robert, in his lonely wood,
Forsook each social duty—to be good
Thus Hobbes on one dear system fix'd his eyes,
And prov'd his nature wretched—to be wise
Each zealot thus, elate with ghostly pride,
Adores his God, and hates the world beside

Man's intolerance conflicts with Nature's obvious broadmindedness

Look on her work—on every page you'll find
Inscrib'd the doctrine of the social mind

⁶⁸ *The Mistletoe and the Passion-Flower*

⁶⁸ See p. 122

See countless worlds of insect beings share
 Th' unenvied regions of the liberal air!
 In the same grove what music void of strife!
 Heirs of one stream what tribes of scaly life!
 See earth, and air, and fire, and flood combine
 Of general good to aid the great design

We enjoy such diversities in the physical world—why not in the realm of human opinion? "The social mind" follows Nature in her toleration of differences

But although Langhorne believes in serving mankind, something within him shrinks from the noise and bustle of the strenuous life. Just once, so far as I have observed, he finds a reconciliation of his conflict by blending Shaftesbury's ethics with Hartley's psychology. *The Wilding and the Broom* is a curious little *estraf* between James Thomson and William Hamilton of Bangour.⁸⁷ The former prefers the wilding. We should, he insists,

lightly deem
 Of all but moral beauty

Hamilton, on the other hand, defends the fruitless but lovely broom flower. Beauty, he retorts, is morality

Of moral uses take the strife,
 Leave me the elegance of life
 Whatever charms the ear or eye,
 All beauty and all harmony,
 If sweet sensations they produce,
 I know they have their moral use,
 I know that Nature's charms can move
 The springs that strike to virtue's love

Langhorne plainly sides with Hamilton. The lines are trivial in expression but significant in content. Wordsworth will also know how sensations drawn from nature mold the moral being and lead to love of man

Meanwhile thy Aristippus' shade
 Shall seek where sweet Anacreon plays,
 Where Chapelle spends his festive days,
 Where lies the vine-empurpled glade
 By tuneful Chaulieu vocal made,
 Or where our Shenstone's mossy cell,
 Or where the fair Deshoulières strays,

⁸⁷ For Hamilton see I, 435-38

Or Hammond and Pavilion dwell,
 And Gresset's gentle spirit roves
 Surrounded by a group of Loves
 With roses crown'd and asphodel⁸⁸

This pagan and Frenchified retirement to a rococo Elysian Fields is at least something new. It represents the ideal of John Gilbert Cooper (1723-1769). After leaving Trinity College, Cambridge, this scion of a good Nottinghamshire family embarked upon a life of lettered ease. In addition to his poems he produced a *Life of Socrates* (1749) and *Letters Concerning Taste* (1754), a treatise that repeats in prose the ideas of his chief poem, *The Power of Harmony* (1745). Not pretending to be a Christian, he lived and wrote as a highly eclectic pagan who combined—in a descending order of importance—sceptical Epicureanism, aesthetic Platonism, and a very soft Stoicism. His favorite modern philosopher, needless to say, was Shaftesbury. Akenside, to whom he addressed *Epistles to the Great* (1758), was his close friend. Like Akenside, Cooper was not only a disciple of Shaftesbury but a keen liberal with a strain of theoretical “republicanism.” He was vain and affected but not at all vicious. Though incapable of profound thought or feeling, he was a fluent and skilful versifier. His translation of Gresset's *Ver Vert* (1759) reveals the chief model of his daintily foppish technique.

The trend of Neo-Hellenism which arises in the second half of the eighteenth century exerts its influence in various directions. One sees it at work in the epics of Glover and Wilkie, the choric tragedies of Mason, the Greek Anthology hymns and inscriptions of Akenside, the Pindaric odes of Collins and Gray. The materials presented by rediscovered Greece are not in themselves romantic, but the imagination may adapt them to romantic uses. They may inspire cool chastity of thought and style, or warmly bardic efforts to be sublime and creative. Among elegant libertines, and to a less extent among serious thinkers, the movement fosters a faint revival of pagan philosophies. The relation between Athenian democracy and Athenian art encourages the lover of freedom. Most of all, however, eighteenth-century Neo-Hellenism appeals to the virtuoso, the man of taste, who, since the doctrine of art for art's sake has not yet taken form, requires an ethical rationalization of his aestheticism. Hence the dominant temper of Neo-Hellenism readily unites with the philosophy of Shaftesbury.⁸⁹ The special qualities of Cooper's Neo-Hellenism may be understood in relation to these facts.

⁸⁸ *The Call of Aristippus*

⁸⁹ See B. H. Stern, *The Rise of Romantic Hellenism in English Literature*

In many respects, however, Cooper is a perfectly orthodox man of feeling, strong for benevolence and social bliss

Teach me, what all believe, but few possess,
That life's best science is ourselves to know,
The first of human blessings is to bless,
And happiest he who feels another's woe ⁷⁰

This principle is not only ethical but religious, for God

looks thro' all
The plan of Nature with congenial love,
Where the great social link of mutual aid
Through ev'ry atom twines, where all conspire
To form one system of eternal good,
Of harmony and bliss, in forms distinct,
Of natures various ⁷¹

For Cooper, however, these ideas are not incitements to activity but mental luxuries to be enjoyed in the cool shades of *The Retreat of Aristippus*

Barring a certain foppery of manner, the following lines are typical of the contemplative retirement tradition

Led by unerring Nature's voice,
I haunt retirement's silent shade,
Contentment's humble lot and choice,
Where on the mossy sofa laid,
I see, through contemplation's eye,
The white-wing'd cherub innocence
Each blessing of her native sky
To sympathetic hearts dispense

Where solitude's calm vot'ries find
Of knowledge th' inexhausted prize,
And truth, immortal truth bestows,
Clad in ethereal robes of light,
Pure as the flakes of falling snows,
Unenvied unprov'd delight ⁷²

But "the mossy sofa" becomes the couch of an antique symposium

In my retreat Euterpe plays,
Where Science, garlanded with flow'rs,
Enraptur'd listens to her lays
Beneath the shade of myrtle bow'rs ⁷³

⁷⁰ *Shakespeare A Vision*

⁷² *The Retreat of Aristippus*

⁷¹ *The Power of Harmony*

⁷³ *The Apology of Aristippus*

In Cooper's poems, "knowledge," "truth," and "science" are not to be interpreted in a rationalistic sense. They are merely the pleasures of a cultivated gentleman. As befits one who dons the robes of Aristippus, Cooper regards reason with a gay scepticism

Let the furr'd pedants of the schools,
In learning's formidable show,
Full of wise saws and bookish rules,
The meagre dupes of misery grow
A lovelier doctrine I profess
Than their dull science can avow,
All that belongs to happiness
Their *heads* are welcome still to *know*,
My *heart's* contented to *possess*
For in soft eloquence and ease,
Secure of living whilst I live,
Each momentary bliss I seize,
Ere these warm faculties decay,
The fleeting moments to deceive
Of human life's allotted day ⁷⁴

Time speeds on so rapidly that,

Since wisdom will afford me less
Than what from harmless follies rise,
I cannot spare from happiness
A single moment to be wise ⁷⁵

These views are not intentionally demoralizing, for Cooper's ideal of the good life is a harmlessly pagan playfulness

And Virtue moaps not in the cell
Where cloister'd Pride and Penance dwell,
But, in the chariot of the Loves,
She triumphs innocently gay,
Drawn by the yok'd Idalian doves,
Whilst young Affections lead the way
To the warm regions of the heart,
Whence selfish fiends of Vice depart,
Like spectres at th' approach of day ⁷⁶

The picture might have been painted by Boucher

Cooper, however, is no mere fribble. He has a more serious side which is

⁷⁴ *The Call of Aristippus*

⁷⁵ *The Apology of Aristippus*

⁷⁶ *The Call of Aristippus*

not to be satisfied by this rococo Epicureanism. In *The Power of Harmony* (1745)⁷⁷ he turns to Shaftesbury's aesthetic ethics. His "Design" presents the gist of the theory: "Whatever is true, just, and harmonious, whether in nature or morals, gives an instantaneous pleasure to the mind, exclusive of reflection. For the great Creator of all things, infinitely wise and good, ordained a perpetual agreement between the faculties of moral perception, the powers of fancy, and the organs of bodily sensation, when they are free and undistempred. From hence is deducible the most comfortable, as well as the most true philosophy that ever adorned the world, namely a constant admiration of the beauty of the creation, terminating in the adoration of the First Cause, which naturally leads the mind to co-operate with his grand design for the promotion of universal happiness."

An important feature of this doctrine is the way in which, by relating the enjoyment of beauty to the cosmic good will, it endeavors to give a "social" tone to the private pleasure of the aesthete. Equally significant is the fact that the response to goodness and beauty, which Cooper declares to be "inseparable," is "instantaneous" and "exclusive of reflection." The principle rejects the authority of analytical reason both in the arts and in the sphere of morals.

Cooper's purpose, then, is "to show that a constant attention to what is perfect and beautiful in nature will by degrees harmonize the soul to a responsive regularity and sympathetic order." This philosophy, the poet realizes more clearly than most of his contemporaries, demands complete freedom from the trammels of Christianity.

Come all ye sons of liberty, who wake
From dreams of superstition, where the soul,
Thro' mists of forced belief, but dimly views
Its own great Maker, come, and I will guide,
Uninterrupted by the jargon shrill
Of peevish priests, your footsteps to the throne
Where pleasure reigns with reason, to behold
His majesty celestial, and adore
Him thro' each object of proportion fair,
The source of virtue, harmony, and bliss!

⁷⁷ Akenside's *Pleasures of Imagination* appeared in the preceding year, but although the friends probably compared notes the two poems resemble each other only as examples of a type whose general outlines had already been established by such poems as Isaac Hawkins Browne's *Of Design and Beauty* (1734), Henry Brooke's *Universal Beauty* (1735), and the anonymous *Order* (1737). All of these poems are described in Vol. I.

Cooper bows before less contemptible authorities, asking Virtue to guide him,

Whilst I thro' unfrequented paths pursue
The steps of Grecian sages, and display
The just similitude of moral charms,
Of Harmony and Joy, with this fair frame
Of outward things, which thro' untainted sense
With a fraternal goodness fires the soul

Although Cooper is not a very keen observer of external nature, he is eager to show that man's comprehension of universal harmony depends upon specific aesthetic experiences. Each "nat'ral scene" possesses its own "moral power." In the following lines he paraphrases a famous passage in Shaftesbury's *Moralists*:

Ye fields and woods, and silver winding streams,
Ye lily'd valleys, and resounding rocks,
Where faithful Echo dwells, ye mansions blest
Where Nature reigns throughout the wide expanse,
In majesty serene of opening Heav'n,
 hail, thrice hail,
Ye solitary seats where Wisdom seeks
Beauty and Good, th' unseparable pair,
Sweet offspring of the sky, those emblems fair
Of the celestial Cause

Even scenes of desolation and horror may be "Connected to this universal frame" by a theory of moral chiaroscuro:

The light,
Not intermingled with opposing shades,
Had shone unworship'd by the Persian priest
With undistinguish'd rays

The Power of Harmony is by far the most serious of Cooper's poems. It provides a respectable and stately pleasure dome within which he can enjoy the politely frivolous Epicureanism which he more frequently cultivates:

And when th' invidious hand of Time
By stealth shall silver o'er my head,
Still Pleasure's rosy walks I'll tread,
Still with the jocund Muses rhyme,
And haunt the green Idalian bow'rs
Whilst wanton boys of Paphos' court
In myrtles hide my staff for sport,
And coif me, where I'm bald, with flow'rs⁷⁸

⁷⁸ *The Call of Aristippus*

Cooper's friend Mark Akenside (1721-1770) deserves more respect than most critics have vouchsafed him. Admittedly he can be very heavy, rhetorical, verbose, abstract. His odes, of which he wrote far too many, are seldom defensible: he has no gift for the lyric. In reflective poetry, however, he displays a marked capacity for emotional response to ideas. He has real dignity—even a kind of loftiness. He has mastered the modulations of blank verse. Such Neo-Hellenic pieces as *Hymn to the Naiads* and *Inscription for a Grotto* are not unworthy of Landor, and *The Pleasures of Imagination*, for all its tedious stretches, is a very respectable philosophical poem. It is impossible to know Akenside well without feeling that Wordsworth must have read him with care.

The pattern of Akenside's life coincides with the dominant pattern of this book. His father was a Presbyterian butcher of Newcastle-on-Tyne. Mark went to Edinburgh University with the intention of studying for the ministry of his sect. Abandoning this ambition, he turned to medicine and took his M.D. at Leyden. Besides possessing the Protestant-bourgeois roots from which grow the most perfect blooms of sentimentalism, he was also a passionate anti-Walpole Whig who, as Dr. Johnson puts it, "retained an unnecessary and outrageous zeal for what he called and thought liberty."⁷⁹ His background, with its tradition of earnest energy, helps to explain why he takes the philosophy of Shaftesbury so much harder than that genteel lotus-eater, Cooper. Right or wrong, he is definitely a religious person.

Even the most laitudinarian of Akenside's contemporaries would probably have hesitated to describe him as a Christian. No inferences as to his orthodoxy are to be drawn from his praise of Hoadly as the champion of "public virtue, public freedom" and the enemy of "imposture," "sacerdotal night," "persecution," "sacred folly," "monkish craft," and "regal zeal."⁸⁰ Sometimes, in gentler moods, his love of nature and his Neo-Hellenism fuse in a prayer to

Ye powers unseen to whom the bards of Greece
Erected altars

He asks these nature deities, whom Holderlin might have joined him in worshipping, to lend him something of their powers:

It is the hour
When most I love to invoke you, and have felt
Most frequent your glad ministry divine

⁷⁹ Late in life he became much more conservative, but my remark applies to the period in which he produced all his most characteristic poems.

The air is calm the Sun's unveiled orb
 Shines in the middle Heaven The harvest round
 Stands quiet, and among the golden sheaves
 The reapers lie reclined

Aloft in Heaven
 Abide ye? or on those transparent clouds
 Pass ye from hill to hill?

From what lov'd haunt
 Shall I expect you? Let me once more feel
 Your influence, O ye kind inspiring powers!

And then at some
 More active moment will I call them forth
 Anew, and join them in majestic forms,
 And give them utterance in harmonious strains,
 That all mankind shall wonder at your sway⁸¹

It is characteristic of Akenside that these feelings should be experienced at broad noon His muse does not cultivate nocturnal moping

Nor where the boding raven chants,
 Nor near the owl's unhallowed haunts
 Will she her cares employ,
 But flies from ruins and from tombs,
 From Superstition's horrid glooms,
 To day-light and to joy⁸²

In keeping with these tastes is his deep respect for natural philosophy, not only as useful in itself but as the guardian of mental, moral, and spiritual virtues In the *Hymn to Science* he urges science to dispel

The scholiast's learning, sophist's cant,
 The visionary bigot's rant,
 The monk's philosophy

This task performed, science is to reveal the mysteries of external nature. Turning next to the human mind, she will trace the laws of memory and association, and finally

Then launch through being's wide extent,
 Let the fair scale, with just ascent,
 And cautious steps, be trod,
 And from the dead corporeal mass
 Through each successive order pass
 To Instinct, Reason, God

⁸¹ *Inscriptions, VIII*

⁸² *Book I, Ode I Preface*

It is on the strength of such passages that Mr Potter hails this poet as a "prophet of evolution"⁸³ One may grant, a little more cautiously, that Akenside shares a fairly widespread tendency to regard the "chain of being" as a developing organism with an upward movement running through its links But as we shall see later this conception is less important for Akenside than the ability of the mind to run up and down the whole scale through the power of imagination He is more significantly a prophet of transcendentalism than of evolution

In any case we should note that when science reaches the pinnacle of her ascent she must resign her powers, for on bringing her before the throne Akenside adds

There, Science! veil thy daring eye,
Nor dive too deep, nor soar too high,
In that divine abyss
To Faith content thy beams to lend,
Her hopes to assure, her steps befriend,
And light her way to bliss

Although these words are unusually meek and reverent for Akenside, there is no doubt that he believes in God On reading the *Memoirs of the House of Brandenburg* he is horrified that Frederick, a lawgiver, should be an atheist⁸⁴

In a way that reminds one of Shelley, his political liberalism combines with his lofty, if not toplofty, conception of poetry The poet imparts "forms divine to mortal sense" He should be a legislator and a prophet, speaking boldly on contemporary affairs, pointing the way to glory, freedom, and virtue He should liberate mankind from "barbaric Zeal" and "mysterious monks"⁸⁵ Akenside illustrates the continuity running through old-fashioned Whiggery of the "great Nassau" type, the "patriot" fervors of the mid-century, and the response of the young romantics to the French Revolution

His personal aims as a poet are stated more broadly in his ode *To Caleb Hardinge, M D*,⁸⁶ where he exhorts his friend

O! vers'd in all the human frame,
Lead thou where'er my labour lies,
And English fancy's eager flame
To Grecian purity chastise
While hand in hand, at Wisdom's shrine,

⁸³ G R Potter, "Mark Akenside, Prophet of Evolution," *Modern Philology*, XXIV, 55-64

⁸⁴ *Book II, Ode XIII To the Author of Memoirs of the House of Brandenburg*

⁸⁵ *Book I, Ode XVIII To the Earl of Huntingdon*

⁸⁶ *Book I, Ode XVI*

a finished composition Akenside's theme is moral imagination he wishes us to share in a creative process In his own words, he seeks "to enlarge and harmonize the imagination, and by that means insensibly dispose the minds of men to a similar taste and habit of thinking in religion, morals, and civil life"⁹⁰ It is the aim of Wordsworth

Akenside conceives of his subject as essentially religious, for imaginative power is one of the divine attributes

From Heaven my strains begin, from Heaven descends
The flame of genius to the human breast,
And love and beauty, and poetic joy,
And inspiration

The first chapter of Genesis is Platonically paraphrased Before the phenomenal world existed,

Then liv'd the almighty One then, deep retir'd
In his unfathom'd essence, view'd the forms,
The forms eternal, of created things,⁹¹

From the first
Of days, on them his love divine he fix'd,
His admiration till in time complete,
What he admir'd and lov'd, his vital smile
Unfolded into being⁹²

Akenside does not grapple with the usual Platonic difficulty of supposing that an almighty Mind "admires" forms which are eternal and somehow independent of itself

From this starting point, however, he arrives at an identification of goodness, truth, and beauty

Thus was Beauty sent from Heaven,
The lovely mistress of truth and good
In this dark world for truth and good are one,
And beauty dwells in them, and they in her,
With like participation⁹³

The thought reaches backward through Shaftesbury to Plato and forward to Keats Fully to appreciate God's work is to possess something of His creative

⁹⁰ "The Design "

⁹¹ That is, the Platonic types of the objects that were later to be created by God's loving imagination

⁹² Book I

⁹³ *Ibid*

joy There are, Akenside recognizes, diversities of gifts Nature has assigned different roles to different men "Some," however,

within a finer mould
 She wrought, and temper'd with a purer flame
 To these the Sire Omnipotent unfolds
 The world's harmonious volume, there to read
 The transcript of himself On every part
 They trace the bright impressions of his hand
 In earth or air, the meadow's purple stores,
 The Moon's mild radiance, or the virgin's form
 Blooming with rosy smiles, they see pourtray'd
 That uncreated beauty, which delights
 The mind supreme They also feel her charms
 Enamour'd, they partake the eternal joy⁸⁴

This restriction of "the eternal joy" to men of "finer mould" comes strangely from the democratic Akenside Here of course is the inconsistency between Shaftesbury's ethical connoisseurship and his idea of a moral sense innate in all men Miss Whitney states the difficulty trenchantly "Thus Shaftesbury, starting with a sense of right and wrong that is natural and universal, gradually develops the notion of moral excellence as dependent upon a refined taste for beauty, proportion, and grace in the moral life, consonant with and partly growing out of a taste for those qualities in nature and in art, a notion which leads him into an aristocratic exclusiveness which paved the way for the fashionable cultivation of sensibility throughout the century"⁸⁵

This inconsistency did not disappear at the close of the eighteenth century—witness Wordsworth's efforts to glorify both poet and peasant The problem is usually evaded simply by forgetting the less congenial horn of the dilemma according to whether one is feeling democratic or exclusive at a given moment When the problem must be faced, the usual answer is Pope's "Most have the seeds of judgment in their minds" In other words moral taste is potentially universal but requires development The aristocratic element in this theory is sometimes further softened by asserting that the faculty would develop of itself if men were not neglectful of the lessons of nature The moral virtuoso, furthermore, is not merely selfish, for his appreciation of the universal harmony is "social", and he can justify his enjoyment by

⁸⁴ *Ibid*

⁸⁵ Lois B. Whitney, *Primitivism and the Idea of Progress in English Popular Literature of the Eighteenth Century*, p. 38

preaching its significance to less refined souls and thereby improving them

Wordsworth, it will be remembered, credits the shepherd Michael with "a pleasurable feeling of blind love" toward the beauties of nature. Here is the universal seed which blossoms fully in the poetic mind. Similarly Akenside points to the "swain" who, returning from his labor in the twilight,

loiters to behold
The sunshine gleaming as through amber clouds,
O'er all the western sky, full soon, I ween,
His rude expression of untutor'd airs,
Beyond the power of language, will unfold
The form of beauty smiling at his heart,
How lovely! how commanding!

This instinctive appreciation, however, must be protected and fostered if it is to develop, for the poet continues

But though Heaven
In every breast hath sown these early seeds
Of love and admiration, yet in vain,
Without fair Culture's kind parental aid,
Without enlivening suns, and genial showers,
And shelter from the blast, in vain we hope
The tender plant should rear its blooming head,
Or yield the harvest promised in its spring⁹⁶

Akenside has found a sensible compromise. After all, no romanticist has ever asserted that natural goodness means natural perfection.

Culture alone, on the other hand, cannot impart the primary intuition

What then is taste, but these internal powers
Active, and strong, and feelingly alive
To each fine impulse? a discerning sense
Of decent and sublime, a quick disgust
From things deform'd, or disarrang'd, or gross
In species? This, nor gems, nor stores of gold,
Nor purple state, nor culture can bestow,
But God alone when first his active hand
Imprints the secret bias of the soul⁹⁷

This is one of the rare instances when Akenside speaks of "taste" rather than of "imagination." He draws no definite line between the two. Since aesthetic delight is for him an active process, very similar to the "creative appreciation" of the Crocean school, perfected taste is indistinguishable from imagination.

⁹⁶ Book III

⁹⁷ *Ibid*

Both terms signify the reflection of divine creativeness in the human soul
This fusion of the doctrine of taste and the doctrine of genius will prove
useful to the romantics

It is God's will that man should use his imagination boldly and aspiringly

Else wherefore burns
In mortal bosoms this unquenched hope,
That breathes from day to day sublimer things,
And mocks possession? wherefore darts the mind,
With such resistless ardor to embrace
Majestic forms, impatient to be free,
Spurning the gross control of wilful might,
Proud of the strong contention of her toils,
Proud to be daring?

The high-born soul
Disdains to rest her heaven-aspiring wing
Beneath its native quarry⁹⁸

Pride may be forgiven in a being whose faculties are so godlike

The supremely happy man, says Akenside, is the lover of nature Through
contemplating harmony and grandeur, his mind becomes harmonized and
ennobled Spurning the sordidness of the everyday world, he

appeals to Nature, to the winds
And rolling waves, the Sun's unwearied course,
The elements and seasons all declare
For what the eternal Maker has ordain'd
The powers of man we feel within ourselves
His energy divine he tells the heart,
He meant, he made us to behold and love
What he beholds and loves, the general orb
Of life and being, to be great like him,
Beneficent and active⁹⁹

The experience described is, I believe, a personal one Despite the abstract
and generalizing temper of Akenside's mind, he loves nature deeply Wit-
ness these lines from the uncompleted fourth book of the revised version

O ye Northumbrian shades, which overlook
The rocky pavement and the mossy falls
Of solitary Wensbeck's limpid stream,
How gladly I recall your well-known seats
Belov'd of old, and that delightful time

⁹⁸ Book I

⁹⁹ Book III

When all alone, for many a summer's day,
 I wander'd through your calm recesses, led
 In silence by some powerful hand unseen
 Nor will I e'er forget you Nor shall e'er
 The graver tasks of manhood, or the advice
 Of vulgar wisdom, move me to disclaim
 Those studies which possess'd me in the dawn
 Of life, and fixed the colour of my mind
 For every future year

The child is father of the man Here are the personal background, the thought, and even the cadences of Wordsworth

The analogy with Wordsworth is strengthened by the fact that Akenside, despite his reverence for Locke, does not think of the mind as passively receiving the impressions that emanate from the vernal wood On the contrary,

Mind, mind alone, (bear witness, Earth and Heaven!)
 The living fountains in itself contains
 Of beauteous and sublime

The highest beauty abides in those aspects of nature where the mind imaginatively perceives qualities and powers similar to its own

For what are all
 The forms which brute, unconscious matter wears,
 Greatness of bulk, or symmetry of parts?
 Not reaching to the heart, soon feeble grows
 The superficial impulse

Not so the moral species, nor the powers
 Of genius and design, the ambitious mind
 There sees herself, by these congenial forms
 Touch'd and awaken'd, with intenser act
 She bends each nerve, and meditates well-pleas'd
 Her features in the mirror¹⁰⁰

True beauty, then, is the work of imagination—the response of the human mind to the mind of God in nature

Akenside has much—rather too much—to say of those associative processes which induce man

to behold, in lifeless things,
 The inexpressive semblance of himself,
 Of thought and passion Mark the sable woods

That shade sublime the mountain's nodding brow,
 With what religious awe the solemn scene
 Commands your steps

The workings of such impressions can be demonstrated scientifically. But Akenside again predicts Wordsworth in that, despite his devotion to sensationalistic psychology, he believes that the fully developed mind is free and creative.

Those men who can impose their will upon nature are of various types—scientists, skilled artisans, painters, sculptors

But the chief
 Are poets, eloquent men, who dwell on Earth
 To clothe whate'er the soul admires or loves
 With language and with numbers. Hence to these
 A field is open'd wide as Nature's sphere

The bard nor length, nor depth,
 Nor place, nor form controls

To enhance his toil
 He summoneth from the uttermost extent
 Of things which God hath taught him, every form
 Auxiliar, every power, and all beside
 Excludes imperious His prevailing hand
 Gives, to corporeal essence, life and sense,
 And every stately function of the soul
 The soul itself to him obsequious lies,
 Like matter's passive heap, and as he wills,
 To reason and affection he assigns
 Their just alliances, their just degrees
 Whence his peculiar honours, whence the race
 Of men who people his delightful world,
 Men genuine and according to themselves,
 Transcends as far the uncertain sons of Earth,
 As Earth itself to his delightful world
 The palm of spotless beauty doth resign

Since the earth is the work of divine imaginative energy, this claims a great deal for the human artist. God is a poet, and the poet is godlike—so much so that he can shape a better world than God's. These lines—the last in Akenside's unfinished revision—may be taken as the final message of the man who, in this period, provides the clearest and loftiest poetic expression of the religion of sentiment.

Disregarding separate anonymous pieces, this chapter has dealt with fifteen poets. Of these, rather astonishingly, six are Anglican clergymen, one a minister of the Kirk, and one a Presbyterian theology student.¹⁰¹ There are no women on the list. The Caledonian element is interesting but not particularly significant. Wilkie and Graeme are Scotchmen, Cunningham is Scotch-Irish, Grainger, of Cumberland parentage, was born and reared in Scotland.

The social background of four poets is unknown to me. Of the remaining eleven, three spring from country gentlefolk, six are bourgeois, and two are the sons of poor farmers. Except for Cooper, the atmosphere of the group as a whole is by no means aristocratic. As for politics, Gifford, Hawling, Potter, Cooper, and Akenside are plainly Whigs. The others do not reveal their party affiliations, but often speak a language which was once peculiar to Whiggery although by this period many Tories have adopted it. Nine of the fifteen poets flourished chiefly between 1740 and 1760, six, between 1760 and 1780. The discrepancy would have been diminished had I included several such poets as Hayley and Jerningham, whose careers could not have been covered in their entirety without considering the influence of the French Revolution.

Although the group includes some respectable second-raters who have provided fodder for dissertations, it can hardly be called illustrious. There are a larger number of familiar names than in Chapter VII, but somewhat fewer than in Chapter VIII. Perhaps perversely, I insist that Akenside is a poet of some merit. The rest, viewed with the charity of historical relativism, are never uproariously bad and never more than decently competent. Feebly and uncertainly, however, they seem to be fumbling away from versified rhetoric in the direction of poetry.

As regards religious feeling, no marked cleavage exists between these poets and those of the preceding chapter. Langhorne, indeed, shows almost enough vestiges of Christianity to justify including him in Chapter VIII. With this dubious reservation, the group consists of sentimentalists who, unlike the poets of Chapters VII and VIII, do not choose to be sentimental about Christianity and therefore reflect the cult of feeling in a purer form. This implies merely that the traditional faith has lost its grip upon their imaginations, not that they are consciously and explicitly anti-Christian. Probably a large majority, recognizing no distinction between Christianity

¹⁰¹ Cawthorn and Wilkie, however, lived as educators rather than pastors, and Downman as a physician.

and sentimentalism, regard themselves as good rational Protestants. The only clear exceptions are Hawling and Keate, who may be termed ordinary sentimental deists, and Cooper and Akenside, who combine sentimental deism with a philosophic paganism. Less unmistakably, Whitehead sometimes appears to think of himself as a deist.

The poets of this chapter seem untouched by Evangelicalism, their immediate theological background is latitudinarian. Hawling, Keate, Akenside, and Potter—observe that three of them are non-Christian—sing the praises of Bishop Hoadly. True to this spiritual heritage, the group as a whole stands for liberty and toleration in opposition to priestcraft and popish bigotry.¹⁰² But although they would not wish to be accused of “zeal,” their sensibility makes them slower to attack enthusiasm than more cold-blooded writers.¹⁰³

Newtonianism is an even less important factor than in the preceding chapter. Wilkie is the only warm champion of physico-theology. Although Akenside is a devotee of science, the highest reaches of his thought rise far above a merely teleological conception of the physical universe. In the sentimentalization of scientific ideas, particularly in providing a psychological foundation for benevolism, Hartley is probably influential, but except in Langhorne specific evidence for this supposition is lacking. The group, indeed, displays a rather marked primitivism¹⁰⁴ and anti-intellectualism.¹⁰⁵

It is chiefly as lovers of “contemplation” and connoisseurs of the harmonious cosmic masterpiece, rather than as disciples of science, that these poets look through Nature up to Nature’s God.¹⁰⁶ From Nature they learn the great lesson that God wishes all men to be happy¹⁰⁷ and to share their happiness with others. Benevolence and its joys are everywhere stressed.¹⁰⁸ Most of these writers are too antirationalistic to enjoy erecting large philosophic systems, but in the anonymous *Nature* and in the chief poems of Cooper and Akenside one sees the outlines of the Shaftesburyan universal harmony.

Whether the basic precepts of sentimentalism are best embodied in contemplative retirement or in directly beneficent social activity remains a

¹⁰² Hawling, Langhorne, Potter, Cawthorn, Keate, Cooper, Akenside.

¹⁰³ Only Hawling, Cawthorn, and Keate express opposition to enthusiasm.

¹⁰⁴ Gifford, Delap, Hawling, Langhorne.

¹⁰⁵ Graeme, Keate, Langhorne, Cooper. A more actively negative scepticism appears in Hawling and Whitehead.

¹⁰⁶ *Nature, On Beneficence*, Hawling, Cunningham, Grainger, Keate, Whitehead, Langhorne, Cooper, Akenside.

¹⁰⁷ Cawthorn, Keate, Cooper, Akenside.

¹⁰⁸ *On Beneficence*, Gifford, Delap, Hawling, Grainger, Keate, Whitehead, Langhorne, Cooper.

much disputed question. On the whole the former side receives more support than in Chapters VII and VIII, being championed by Gifford, Cunningham, Graeme, Langhorne (with some wavering), and Cooper. Potter, Keate, Whitehead, and the unknown author of *An Elegy Written at a Carthusian Monastery in the Austrian Netherlands* find much to be said for both standards but lean uncertainly toward the latter. Grainger would be up and doing. Akenside is on the side of activity, but for him activity is primarily imaginative and spiritual—an intense, creative form of contemplation.¹⁰⁹ The familiar reconciliation—retired contemplation generates social impulses—frequently appears.

Among these poets the sense of sin is even more completely atrophied than among those of the two foregoing chapters. We can be good and happy if only we will develop that half-aesthetic, half-moral taste of which all men possess the seeds.¹¹⁰ Here of course the Shaftesbury-Hutcheson influence is pervasive. For Langhorne, beauty and goodness are one, the same thought is implicit in Cooper. Akenside combines beauty, goodness, and truth in a single ideal concept. To judge from their poems, the group seems to be composed chiefly of “good” men, but there is a tinge of libertinism in the reliance on impulse expressed by Hawling, Graeme, and Cooper.

Occasionally also we find the thought that man, as actually or potentially a poet, is by nature not merely innocent, but that he has within him a positive goodness and creativity—his share of the divine benigance and the divine imaginative force. Rightly to appreciate the universal harmony is to be god-like. This transcendentalism is most clearly voiced by Akenside, but it appears with less systematic elaboration in Cawthorn, Downman, Whitehead, and Langhorne.

Finally, let us remind ourselves of the continuity which binds together this chapter and the three preceding ones. The “Sentimental Christians” of Chapter VII are obviously related to the “Four Christian Poets” of Chapter VI. In Chapter VIII, sentimentalism increases and Christianity subsides, but there is no break in the coherence of the theme. At last Christianity has sunk almost completely out of sight, leaving a cult of sentiment which is the outgrowth of the religious thought of the earlier chapters. Chapters I–V prepared for the study of this development partly by setting forth its background, partly by sweeping away extraneous tendencies which might have obscured it. The main channel of our subject now seems clearly marked.

¹⁰⁹ The same view is more weakly reflected by Whitehead and Cooper.

¹¹⁰ Cawthorn, Graeme, Langhorne, Cooper, Akenside.

Chapter X

AESTHETIC SENTIMENTALISTS

AT FIRST GLANCE, THE SIX POETS WHO REMAIN TO BE CONSIDERED ARE SOMEWHAT out of line with the general trend of this study. Any literary historian would doubtless describe Shenstone, the Warton brothers, Chatterton, Collins, and Gray as more or less preromantic. He would recognize, of course, their transitional qualities and their willingness to compromise with the classical tradition, giving due weight to Thomas Warton's apostate lines on Reynold's window, the strange duality of Chatterton, the Neo-Hellenic strain in Collins and Gray, and the element of Augustan wit in the latter. But when all such reservations had been made, these poets would still, in varying degree, deserve to be classified as harbingers of the Romantic Movement. They are not, however, rich in poems or passages illustrating that religion of sentiment which throughout these two volumes has been associated with the rise of romanticism. The same apparent paradox has occasionally appeared in the preceding pages,¹ but when it affects the interpretation of such prominent figures as these it must be grappled with.

Largely owing to a bourgeois utilitarian perversion of the classical ideal, eighteenth-century poetry is predominantly rhetorical and didactic. Even when it tries to sing it explains, argues, and preaches. On various levels of emotional and imaginative power, it versifies conceptual ideas rather than immediate feelings. Even from the beginning of the century there are exceptions, but the generalization will hold. This fact explains why most of the evidence provided in this study has been so explicit in the eighteenth century even poets say what they mean. On the whole, the 1740-1780 versifiers are hardly less outspoken in their didacticism than those of the 1700-1740 period. In certain writers, however, an interesting change may be observed.

By 1740, sentimentalism had become so firmly established in poetry that its religious and philosophical aspects could sometimes be taken for granted while its favorite modes of literary expression were exploited more or less for

¹ For example, Downman and Cunningham in the foregoing chapter.

their own sake. The resultant conventions might be practised by men who had no strong interest in their deeper meaning. The bourgeois, now firmly in the saddle, was no longer constantly compelled to argue for his beliefs; he could begin to cultivate the pleasures of art within the spiritual environment which he had created. In some quarters the decay of rationalism fostered a distaste for analytical thinking in verse, a preference for the spontaneous, the irreflective, the frankly emotional. If human feeling is good in itself, why this eternal talk *about* feeling? Why not simply *feel*, develop new sources of emotional stimulation, and try new ways of expressing new moods?

Hence a reaction against didacticism which is clearly expressed by Joseph Warton in the Preface to his *Odes* (1747): "The public has been so much accustomed of late to didactic poetry alone, and essays on moral subjects, that any work where the imagination is much indulged, will perhaps not be relished or regarded. The author, therefore, of these pieces is in some pain, lest certain austere critics should think them too fanciful or descriptive. But he is convinced that the fashion of moralizing in verse has been carried too far, and as he looks upon invention and imagination to be the chief faculties of a poet, so he will be happy if the following Odes may be looked upon as an attempt to bring back poetry into its right channel." But this development is more evolutionary than revolutionary, since aesthetic theorizing has played so large a part in philosophic sentimentalism. Such men as Akenside have *discussed* the pleasures of imagination, Warton, assuming that the thesis has been established, proposes to *enjoy* those pleasures.

These remarks may serve to explain why our six last poets are sentimental without being persistent preachers of the religion of sentiment. They write in a spiritual climate which has grown so familiar that its codes may be taken for granted by men who are a little weary of arguing. Not that they are thoroughgoing aesthetes. If many other poets of the period mingle imagination with their rhetoric, these relatively nondidactic writers, conversely, are often quite explicit in urging their opinions upon the reader. Under close inspection they reveal their kinship with the tradition which we have been examining.

As a landscape gardener, William Shenstone (1714-1763) provides rich material for the historian of taste. His numerous friendships endear him to those who collect the personal chitchat of the period. In prose he was a sensitive and intelligent critic, and we now realize that he might almost be called the coeditor of Percy's *Reliques*. These distinctions have shed a kind

of glamour over a body of verse which in itself seldom rises above mediocrity

His father intended him for the Church, but his own boyhood desire was to become a physician. Instead, he puttered his life away at Leasowes. Poor health is probably a sufficient explanation of his lack of energy, his low spirits, and his extreme shyness. Gilfillan describes him as "rather passively amiable than actively virtuous." He had no vices, and his foibles were sufficiently harmless. He was sceptical for a long time, but became latterly much impressed with the truth of religion."²

Neither his scepticism nor his change of heart strongly affected his poetry, for he had no depth of feeling. His Protestant sympathies, however, are obvious. The old schoolmistress of his most famous poem loves Sternhold's psalms, and tells her pupils of

The times when Truth by Popish rage did bleed,
And tortious death was true Devotion's meed,
And simple Faith in iron chains did mourn,
That nould on wooden image place her creed,
And lawny saints in smouldering flames did burn
Ah! dearest Lord! forfend thilk days should e'er return.³

This is not one of the more whimsical touches in his sketch of the worthy dame. In other poems he frequently expresses detestation of popery. Ghosts in the churchyard are relics of superstitious fear, but around Ophelia's urn the enlightened Muse

May see light groups of pleasing visions rise,
And phantoms glide, but of celestial kind

These spirits—the angels of a personifying sentimentalist—are Fame, Simplicity, Candour, Innocence, Elegance, Beauty, and Fancy.⁴ When he beholds a mouldering monastic ruin he smiles "To think that mental bondage is no more."⁵

The same theme is treated at some length in *The Ruined Abbey, or, The Effects of Superstition*. Here, however, a hermit's cave is described rather charitably. Though popish, it is related to rural retirement and contemplation

If scoop'd at first by superstitious hands,
The rugged cell received alone the shoals
Of bigot minds, Religion dwells not here,

² *The Poetical Works of William Shenstone* (Edinburgh, 1854), p. xviii

³ *The Schoolmistress*

⁴ *Elegy IV Ophelia's Grave*

⁵ *Elegy XXI*

Yet Virtue, pleased, at intervals retires
 Yet here may Wisdom, as she walks the maze,
 Some serious truths collect

But for the abbey itself no condemnation can be too harsh

These were thy haunts, thy opulent abodes,
 O Superstition! hence the dire disease
 (Balanced with which the famed Athenian pest
 Were a short headache, were the trivial pain
 Of transient indigestion) seized mankind
 Long time she raged, and scarce a southern gale
 Warm'd our chill air, unloaded with the threats
 Of tyrant Rome

The darkness was partly dissipated by Wycliffe, who is astonishingly described as "An Epicurus in the cause of truth" His sole weapon was

reason, thought,
 The light, the radiance, that pervades the soul,
 And sheds its beams on heaven's mysterious way!

The dissolution of the monasteries is described with glee

Each angry friar
 Crawl'd from his bedded strumpet, muttering low
 An ineffectual curse The pervious nooks,
 That, ages past, convey'd the guileful priest
 To play some image on the gaping crowd,
 Imbibe the novel daylight, and expose,
 Obvious, the fraudulent enginery of Rome

Happily, these abodes of vice survive only as decorative objects on landscaped estates,

Now but of use to grace a rural scene,
 To bound our vistas, and to glad the sons
 Of George's reign, reserved for fairer times!

Negatively, then, Shenstone is a stout Protestant, but he shows not one glimmer of positive Christian belief *An Irregular Ode, After Sickness* is remarkable, considering its subject, for being completely devoid of religion. Elsewhere, however, he uses familiar elements of the cult of feeling. He glorifies his favorite theme of friendship by associating it with a pseudo-Newtonian concept of intellectual gravitation

Know, too, by Nature's undiminish'd law,
 Throughout her realms obey'd, the various parts
 Of deep creation, atoms, systems, all,

Attract, and are attracted, nor prevails the law
 Alone in matter, soul alike with soul
 Aspires to join, nor yet in souls alone,
 In each idea it imbibes, is found
 The kind propensity, and when they meet
 And grow familiar, various though their tribe,
 Their tempers various, vow perpetual faith,
 That, should the world's disjointed frame once more
 To chaos yield the sway, amid the wreck
 Their union should survive, with Roman warmth,
 By sacred hospitable laws endear'd,
 Should each idea recollect its friend ⁶

Although temperamentally a man of retirement, Shenstone rather uneasily pays tribute to active benevolence in his elegy *To Delia, with some Flowers, Complaining how much his benevolence Suffers on Account of his Humble Fortune*

Bless'd were my lot to feed the social fires!
 To learn the latent wishes of a friend!
 To give the boon his native taste admires,
 And, for my transport, on his smile depend!

But since his budget—considerably strained by improving Leasowes—forbids the luxury of doing good, he can only cultivate his garden

Faint is my bounded bliss, nor I refuse
 To range where daisies open, rivers roll,
 While prose or song the languid hours amuse,
 And soothe the fond impatience of my soul

Awhile I'll weave the roofs of jasmine bowers,
 And urge with trivial cares the loitering year,
 Awhile I'll prune my grove, protect my flowers,
 Then, unlamented, press an early bier!

Stuffing the tear of sensibility, we move on to the Reverend Joseph Warton (1722–1800)—critic, scholar, schoolmaster, and poet. Though an amiable man, he was not a very devoted priest. One remembers that the Duke of Bolton took him on a tour to the south of France in order that, on the momentarily expected death of the duchess, the pliant parson might solemnize a new marriage between the duke and his mistress. Yet he is said to have been “zealous in his adherence to the church establishment, and

⁶ *Economy*

exemplary in its ordinances and duties" It is certainly no surprise to learn that he was nevertheless "a decided enemy to bigotry and intolerance" Apparently, however, he had some appreciation of his spiritual responsibilities as headmaster of Winchester "His style of preaching was unaffectedly earnest and impressive, and the dignified solemnity with which he read the Liturgy (particularly the Communion-Service) was remarkably awful He had the most happy art of arresting the attention of youth on religious subjects Every Wiccamical reader will recollect his inimitable commentaries on Grotius, on the Sunday evenings, and his discourse annually delivered in the school on Good Friday the impressions made by them cannot be forgotten"⁷

This is a tribute from a favorite student, most of the Wiccamical boys disliked Warton intensely In any case those impressions *have* been forgotten, while his almost completely nonreligious poetry is well known to the modern student Though not rich in ideas, however, it is clearly related to the main theme of this book

This sentimental son of a sentimental father⁸ believes that heaven has inscribed on every heart the words "Be free!"⁹ The command is a divine rebuke to popery, a subject on which Warton heartily agrees with Shenstone A visit to Montauban during his dubious chaplaincy to the Duke of Bolton reminds him of the Albigenian persecution

Give me, beneath a colder, changeful sky,
My soul's best, only pleasure, Liberty!
What millions perish'd near thy mournful flood
When the red papal tyrant cry'd out—"Blood!"¹⁰

He by no means objects, however, to a bit of pseudomedieval spookery, as when he invites Fancy

Let us with silent footsteps go
To charnels and the house of woe,
To Gothic churches, vaults, and tombs,
Where each sad night some virgin comes,
With throbbing breast, and faded cheek,
Her promis'd bridegroom's urn to seek¹¹

⁷ Wooll's memoir, quoted in Chalmers, XVIII, 153

⁸ For Thomas Warton the elder see I, 444-47

⁹ *Ode to Liberty*

¹⁰ *Verses Written at Montauban in France, 1750*

¹¹ *Ode to Fancy*

But this is merely playing with gooseflesh. His serious views may be gathered from the *Ode to Superstition*, which opens with Miltonic banishment of the hateful abstraction

Hence to some convent's gloomy aisles,
Where cheerful daylight never smiles
Tyrant! from Albion haste, to slavish Rome,
There by dim taper's livid light
At the still solemn hours of night,
In pensive musings walk o'er many a sounding tomb

By the last stanza he has reached wholesome daylight

Hail then, ye friends of Reason hail,
Ye foes to Mystery's odious veil,
To Truth's high temple guide my steps aright,
Where Clarke and Wollaston reside
With Locke and Newton by their side,
While Plato sits above enthron'd in endless light

A fine suggestion for an allegorical fresco

The four horsemen of latitudinarianism, mysteriously united with Plato, enable Warton to regard himself as a broadly rational Christian and at the same time provide a defense against an orthodoxy which might threaten the religion of the heart. Thus protected from the odious mysteries of priestcraft, he can turn to the more congenial mysteries of nature. Safe from enthusiasm, he can write *The Enthusiast*. The poems of primitivism and *Il Penseroso* retirement for which he is best known sometimes have a feebly religious quality. "Why," he asks,

should man, mistaken, deem it nobler
To dwell in palaces, and high-roof'd halls,
Than in God's forests, architect supreme!¹²

And he apostrophizes Solitude

O let me calmly dwell with thee,
From noisy mirth and bus'ness free,
With meditation seek the skies,
This folly-fetter'd world despise.¹³

The Enthusiast describes more specifically the psychology of rural contemplation. The charms of nature

all, all conspire
To raise, to soothe, to harmonize the mind,

¹² *The Enthusiast*

¹³ *Ode to Solitude*

To lift on wings of praise, to the great Sire
Of being and of beauty

We have heard something like this before

Thomas Warton the younger (1728–1790) shared many of his brother's tastes, but the two men are easily distinguishable. Compared with Joseph, Thomas is more of a scholar and less of a critic, less "poetical" but a better poet, less religious but a stronger Churchman, more concerned with the Middle Ages and less with "simple" nature, and despite his cultivation of preromantic fashions, more in harmony with the nonsentimental trends surviving in the Johnson circle. He was partly a wit and completely a don, very convivial and not averse to low company. Perhaps his rough exterior concealed a heart of gold, or perhaps he was hard to the core—the point is disputed.

As a young man he aligned himself with the "Patriot" party, in maturer years he espoused a crusty, Oxford common-room Toryism. His High Churchmanship reflected his politics, his antiquarianism, and his personal temper. The Church of England was a pillar of stable government, it had a flavorsome history, and it was thoroughly comfortable, human, and jolly. Warton would agree with the seventeenth-century Tom Brown's assertion that "Tobacco, Ale, and the Protestant Religion" are "the three great blessings of life."¹⁴ Chalmers sorrowfully reports "He hated Puritans and Calvinists, but does not seem to have understood that his own church, and every pure church, has many doctrines in common with them."¹⁵ But indeed doctrines as such were of little importance to him; he simply liked maypoles and growled at their Sabbath-keeping enemies.

Generally speaking, the sentimentalist is far more likely to be a liberal than a conservative, but when he *is* a conservative, he is more likely to be a sentimental medievalist than a sentimental naturalist. This Tory professor was no Dr. Dryasdust. His researches were carried on with real emotional enthusiasm and were closely related to his poetry. Being a scholar, he was a specialist even in his sentimentalism. He lived by his feelings, but his feelings drew him toward the glamorous past. When he writes a retirement piece in his brother's favorite vein he imagines himself as a learned hermit.

At eve, within yon studious nook,
I ope my brass embossed book,
Pourtray'd with many a holy deed

¹⁴ See I, 43

¹⁵ XVIII, 85

Of martyrs, crown'd with heavenly meed
 Then, as my taper waxes dim,
 Chant, ere I sleep, my measur'd hymn,
 And at the close, the gleams behold
 Of parting wings bedropt with gold ¹⁶

In those half-lyrical, half narrative poems which so clearly foretold the verse of Scott, Warton responds, at least dramatically, to the spirit of Christian chivalry

O'er the sepulchre profound,
 E'en now with arching sculptures crown'd,
 He plans the chantry's choral shrine,
 The daily dirge, and rites divine ¹⁷

Blondel and his royal master join in singing

Fearless we climb this hostile shore!
 And thou, the sepulchre of God!
 By mocking pagans rudely trod,
 Bereft of every awful rite,
 And quench'd thy lamps that beam'd so bright,
 For thee, from Britain's distant coast,
 Lo, Richard leads his faithful host! ¹⁸

The bearing of such passages on Warton's personal religion is not easy to determine. Burrowing through his folios, this bookworm of sensibility came face to face with medieval Catholicism. He never quite knew what to make of it. Nothing in his type of High Churchmanship would give him any real sympathy with it, but something in its flavor appealed to his imagination. It was inseparable from those qualities in poetry and architecture that stirred him most deeply. Repugnant to reason, it was delightful to fancy. And so, paying no heed whatever to the doctrines of Catholicism, he obtained a quasi-religious thrill from its superficial trappings. One of the choicest *Pleasures to Melancholy* is to walk at night through the aisles of a ruined abbey,

where mused of old
 The cloyster'd brothers thro' the gloomy void
 That far extends beyond their ample arch
 As on I pace, religious horror wraps
 My soul in dread repose

¹⁶ *Inscription in a Hermitage*

¹⁷ *The Grave of King Arthur*

¹⁸ *The Crusade*

Apparently he sees no difference between this pleasantly superstitious fear and the feelings of the monks themselves. He does not allow such moods to interfere with his devotion to truth and liberty, for the dedication of the Radcliffe Camera in 1749 inspires these lines in praise of Oxford dons of the preceding century

And see yon sapient train¹ with liberal aim,
'Twas theirs new plans of liberty to frame,
And on the Gothic gloom of slavish sway
To shed the dawn of intellectual day¹⁹

But Gothic gloom is very effective aesthetically, and Warton has no religion which can firmly be separated from "fancy." The conflict emerges clearly in the *Verses on Sir Joshua Reynolds' Painted Window*

But chief, enraptur'd have I lov'd to roam,
A lingering votary, the vaulted dome,
Where the tall shafts, that mount in massy pride,
Their mingling branches shoot from side to side,

Where Superstition with capricious hand
In many a maze the wreathed window plann'd,
With hues romantic ting'd the gorgeous pane,
To fill with holy light the wondrous fane

Gothic architecture is indubitably romantic, but is it holy or superstitious? And what is the difference? On such questions it is unprofitable to press Warton very hard

In this extremely polite epistle he recants his Gothic tastes, for Sir Joshua's window has won him over to the bright, explicit reasonableness of classicism

Sudden, the sombrous imagery is fled,
Which late my visionary rapture fed
Thy powerful hand has broke the Gothic chain,
And brought my bosom home to truth again,
To truth, by no peculiar taste confin'd,
Whose universal pattern strikes mankind,
To truth, whose bold and unresisted claim
Checks frail caprice, and fashion's fickle claim,
To truth, whose charms deception's magic quell,
And bind coy Fancy in a stronger spell

¹⁹ *The Triumph of Isis*

This conversion, however, is not permanent. The old conflict between head and heart reappears when Warton sees the remains of Vale-Royal Abbey. He cannot help loving the place:

For though the sorceress, Superstition blind,
Amid the pomp of dreadful sacrifice,
O'er the dim roofs, to cheat the tranced mind,
Oft bade her visionary gleams arise,

the abbey was the abode of hospitality, pious contemplation, and, above all, art and learning

Here ancient Art her daedal fancies play'd
In the quaint mazes of the crisped roof,
In mellow glooms the speaking pane array'd,
And rang'd the cluster'd column, massy proof

Here Learning, guarded from a barbarous age,
Hover'd awhile, nor dar'd attempt the day,
But patient trac'd upon the pictur'd page
The holy legend, or heroic lay

Here too the minstrel came and "Tun'd his bold harp to tales of chivalry"
But although "th'ingenious Muse" must be forgiven for these picturesque recollections,

Severer Reason forms far other views,
And scans the scene with philosophic ken

From these deserted domes new glories rise,
More useful institutes, adorning man,
Manners enlarg'd, and new civilities,
On fresh foundations build the social plan

Science, on ampler plume, a bolder flight
Essays, escap'd from Superstition's shrine,
While freed Religion, like primeval light
Bursting from chaos, spreads her warmth divine²⁰

The poems of Thomas Warton, then, in no way controvert the thesis that eighteenth-century sentimentalism is the child of Protestantism. One may legitimately argue that such affection for the Middle Ages, despite its waverings and inconsistencies, ultimately helped to break down anti-Catholic prejudices and thus paved the way for the Oxford Movement. But to

²⁰ *Ode III Written at Vale Royal Abbey in Cheshire*

imagine an interview between Warton and a group of nineteenth-century Tractarians is to be convinced that there is nothing essentially Catholic in his medievalism. He would repudiate any attempt to trace a connection between his antienthusiastic High Churchmanship and his fondness for stained glass. The former belongs to reason, he would say, the latter to fancy. His Protestantism has reached so nearly complete a state of liquefaction that he can, though not without uneasiness, sentimentalize the externals of a religion in which he has no serious belief.

Another medievalist whom it would be rash to hail as a precursor of Newman is Thomas Chatterton (1752-1770). While Warton was pleasantly scaring himself in ruined abbeys, the marvelous boy was escaping from the dullness of Bristol into a richly imagined Catholic society. Religion permeates the thoughts and actions of Canynge and Rowley and the rest. It enters into their poetry.

But now the Worde of Godde is come,
Borne of Maide Marie toe brynge home
Mankynde hys shepe,
Theme for to keepe
In the folde of hys heavenlie kyngdome ²¹

Thomas Warton was able to discern that such things were forgeries, he could not see how much more genuine they were than his own work.

To Chatterton's people the saints are living spiritual realities. "Mai good Seyncte Cuthberte wathe Syrre Robert wele," ²² cries the nut-brown Elmoure, and another poem begins

Sprites of the bleste, the pious Nygelle sed,
Poure owte yer pleasaunce on mie fadres hedde ²³

Magnificently Rowley compliments "Johannes Carpenterre Byshoppe of Worcesterre "

The saintes ynne stones so netelie are carvelled,
Theie scantlie are whatte theie enseeme to be,
Bie fervente praier of yours myghte rear theyre heade,
And chaunte owte masses to our Vyrgyne ²⁴

²¹ *The Parlyamente of Sprytes*

²² *Eclogue the Fourth Elmoure and Juga*

²³ *Eclogue the Second Nygelle*

²⁴ *The Parlyamente of Sprytes*

These pious folk are so secure in their faith that on occasion they can regard it with humour

There was a broder of orderys whyte
 He songe hys masses yn the nyghte
 Ave Maria, Jesu Maria,
 The nonnes al slepeynge yn the dortoure
 Thoughte hym of al syngeynge freeres the floure,
 Ave Maria, Jesu Maria²⁵

The religious element in the *Rowley Poems* never goes deep, but it provides local and temporal color of great vividness. On close scrutiny, however, the illusion reveals imperfections. Canynge declares to King Edward

Was Godde to serche our hertes and reines,
 The beste were synners grete,
 Christ's vycarr only knowes na synne,
 Ynne all this mortall state²⁶

The first two lines are unexceptionable, the last two betray ignorance of the fact that the Pope, like all Christians, is a sinner by definition. The fine realism of the following passage on Saint Warburgh is destroyed by one false note

Stronge ynn faithfulness, he trodde
 Overr the waterr lyke a godde,
 Till he gaynde the distant becke,
 Ynn whose bankes hys staffe dydd steck,
 Witness to the myrracle²⁷

"Like a god," of course, is pure eighteenth century. For Rowley, the only possible comparison would be between the saint and the one Incarnate Lord.

Occasionally, too, the sentimentalism of Chatterton's day invades the world of Rowley. There is something Whiggish about the *Bristowe Tragedie* and a touch of "universal benevolence" in the *Balade of Charitie*. The minstrels in *Aella* are perhaps a little too fond of nature. In the opening lines of the third *Eclogue*, Chatterton's astonishing lingo imperfectly disguises an unmedieval primitivism.

Wouldst thou kenn Nature in her better parte?
 Goe, serche the logges and bordels of the hynde,
 Giff theie have anie, itte ys roughe-made arte,
 Inne hem you see the blakied forme of kynde

²⁵ *The Freere of Orderys Whyte*

²⁶ *Bristowe Tragedy*

²⁷ *Songe of Seyncte Warburghe*

In themselves, however, such lapses are neither absurd nor numerous enough to preclude the conjecture that Chatterton may have wished to escape not merely into a world of thrilling remoteness but into a world of happy faith Rowley was monk as well as poet As a student at Colston's Hospital, Chatterton himself wore the tonsure and boarded on the site of a Carmelite monastery²⁸ He wrote Dodsley of his wish "to convince the world that the monks (of whom some have so despicable an opinion) were not such blockheads as generally thought, and that good poetry might be wrote in the dark days of superstition, as well as in these more enlightened ages" One remembers the long-established connection of the family with St Mary Redcliffe and Chatterton's way of gazing at the church from the meadows in a long Keats-like trance "Is there not," asks Beers, "a breath of the cloister in all this, reminding one of the child martyr in Chaucer's 'Prioress Tale,' the 'litel clergeon, seven yeer of age'?"²⁹ Perhaps, but one fears that the comparison would have startled the lad's fellow-apprentices

According to his sister, he was reading works of history and divinity at the age of eleven At twelve or fourteen—the evidence is conflicting—he was confirmed and seemed to take the experience seriously Two Scripture-paraphrases were among the results³⁰ He began his literary career with sacred verse, for his first published poem was *On the last Epiphany, or Christ coming to Judgment*³¹ He was then a child of eleven About a year later he wrote *A Hymn for Christmas Day* These pious juvenilia are precocious in vocabulary and craftsmanship but otherwise unremarkable Close on their heels follow his earliest exercises in satire They begin with *Apostate Will*, a flat little tale of a man who professed Methodism for the sake of gain but later forsook it from the same motive

The satires were to continue, but not the childish piety Very soon Christianity became associated in his mind with the smugness and dullness of Bristol One can see him pulling away from his catechism toward something more "rational" in *The Copernican System*, a dry little catalogue of the planets ending with the tag

These are thy wondrous works, first Source of good!
Now more admir'd in being understood

²⁸ E. H. W. Meyerstein, *A Life of Thomas Chatterton*, p. 156

²⁹ H. A. Beers, *History of English Romanticism in the Eighteenth Century*, p. 342

³⁰ Meyerstein, *Life of Thomas Chatterton*, pp. 34 and 38

³¹ Published January 8, 1763, in *Felix Farley's Journal*

Though he is forced to attend services in Bristol Cathedral with the rest of the Colston boys, he spends his time there in ogling and sneering

If (but 'tis seldom) no fair female face
 Attracts my notice by some glowing grace,
 Around the monuments I cast my eyes,
 And see absurdities and nonsense rise,
 Here rueful-visag'd angels seem to tell
 With weeping eyes, a soul is gone to hell,
 There a child's head supported by duck's wings,
 With toothless mouth a hallelujah sings³²

This from the lad who had already begun to glorify ecclesiastical architecture through the reverent lips of Rowley

Too brilliantly gifted for his environment but not strong enough to triumph over it, Chatterton tried to escape through the portals of imagination. He toyed a little with the familiar conventions of sensibility,³³ but they were of small use to a boy who had created a medieval city of his own. Rowley, however, was not his only mask. In many of his modern-English poems he pretended to be a man like Churchill—a witty, satirical libertine, a devil with the ladies, a thorn in the side of the respectable. This creation of his fancy, however, had other concerns than a wench and a bottle. He was a foe of priestcraft and tyranny, a champion of reason, nature, and the chainless conscience. Unfortunately this ideal figure, unlike Rowley, could be imitated in real life as well as in poetry. There is reason to fear that Chatterton's precocious efforts to dramatize himself as a sentimental libertine were only too realistic. I would merely suggest that even here he was trying to escape, though by means of an aesthetic figment which was not sufficiently detached from actuality. This is the disguise which he usually wore among the apprentices of Bristol and which he took with him to London. He was wearing it when he died.

The swaggering "free thought" of the would-be Don Juan of Bristol³⁴ does not require much attention. All that he says has been said less boyishly by the wits of Chapter II. He has his fun with the enthusiastic carnality of Methodism,³⁵ but he finds that his own carnality mingles more easily with blasphemy. Before Lydia Cotton he ruffles his plumes

But ask your orthodox divine
 If ye perchance should read this line

³² *Sunday*

³³ See for example the melancholy *Elegy, to the Memory of Mr. Thomas Philips*

³⁴ I owe the metaphor to Meyerstein, *Life of Thomas Chatterton*, p. 97

³⁵ *The Methodist*. Chatterton also considered, but did not execute, a series of ironic satires written in the character of a Methodist.

Which fancy now inspires
 Will all his sermons, preaching, prayers,
 His Hell, his Heaven, his solemn airs,
 Quench nature's rising fires?

In natural religion free,
 I to no other bow the knee,
 Nature's the God I own
 Let priests of future torments tell,
Your anger is the only Hell,
 No other Hell is known⁸⁶

The theology of "natural religion" is set forth more soberly in *The Defence*⁸⁷ Chatterton affirms his belief in

a God immortal, boundless, wise,
 Who bid our glories of creation rise,

but he refuses to accept any dogmas concerning God's nature or His relations with man

If in myself I think my notion just,
 The church and all her arguments are dust
 Religion's but opinion's bastard son,
 A perfect mystery, more than three in one
 'Tis fancy all, distempers of the mind,
 As education taught us, we're inclin'd
 Happy the man, whose reason bids him see
 Mankind are by the state of nature free,
 Who, thinking for himself, despises those,
 That would upon his better sense impose,
 Is to himself the minister of God,
 Nor dreads the path that Athanasius trod
 Happy (if mortals can be) is the man,
 Who, not by priest, but reason rules his span,
 Reason, to its possessor a sure guide,
 Reason, a thorn in revelation's side

In such passages the doctrine of the Inner Light reaches its nadir⁸⁸

Deeply buried in this rubbish was a spark of religious feeling. *The Resignation* is a genuinely moving hymn to the God of Nature.

O God, whose thunder shakes the sky,
 Whose eye this atom globe surveys,

⁸⁶ *To a Lady in Bristol*

⁸⁷ Dated December 25, 1769

⁸⁸ See also the livelier mockery of revelation, conscience, and priestcraft in *Happiness*

To thee, my only rock, I fly,
Thy mercy in thy justice praise

The mystic mazes of thy will,
The shadows of celestial light,
Are past the power of human skill—
But what th' Eternal acts is right

The gloomy mantle of the night,
Which on my sinking spirit steals,
Will vanish at the morning light,
Which God, my East, my Sun, reveals

This poem, unparalleled in Chatterton's work, has elsewhere been cited in justification of the hope "that the licentious impieties to which in certain moods he gave utterance, were transient workings of an evil power which would have succumbed to holier influences"³⁰ Let us try to believe so, remembering that few of us would care to have our accounts balanced so very early

In all the modern-English poems I find only one dubious hint of an attraction toward the faith of the Rowleian world In a gloomy *Elegy* of 1769 he writes

The darksome ruins of some sacred cell,
Where erst the sons of superstition trod,
Tott'ring upon the mossy meadow, tell
We better know, but less adore our God

The obligatory "sons of superstition" mars, but does not entirely vitiate, the last line Perhaps, however, I read into the passage a meaning which Chatterton never intended On the whole one certainly cannot say that the religion of his forgeries is a reflection of his personal feelings The *Rowley Poems* are an aesthetic refuge from the inadequacy of life, and Chatterton is clever enough to give the figments of his imagination, in religion as in other respects, a good deal of dramatic verisimilitude The sentimental libertinism of his modern poems, though very histrionic, approaches his actual opinions more closely But behind the sneer is the heart of a proud, unhappy, wonderfully gifted boy—a heart which these pages have not succeeded in probing very deeply

"His morals were pure, and his opinions pious," writes Dr Johnson of William Collins (1721-1759) Even when the flesh lagged far behind the

³⁰ C J Abbey and J H Overton, *The English Church in the Eighteenth Century*, II, 306-7

spirit, this poet was undoubtedly a Christian. His father, the reputable hatter of Chichester, intended him for the ministry, and though Collins was dissuaded from this aim by a London acquaintance he seems never to have abandoned his principles. After his mind began to fail he owed to the Scriptures his only peaceful moments.

Hence it is surprising that the poems of Collins reveal hardly a glimmer of religious feeling and still less of religious thought. Of course one does not expect that every poem of a Christian poet will give a specific expression of his faith, but the way in which Collins, when treating such themes as mercy, pity, peace, liberty, the passions, and death, manages to avoid the slightest hint of a religious point of view suggests a wide gap between his real opinions and his art. The reasons for this cleavage are not far to seek. Even more than his friend Joseph Warton he was in reaction against didacticism, and he saw no way of writing from the depths of his own spirit without being preachy and argumentative. Shy and elusive, he shrank from poetic self-exposure, and yet was far too much a man of feeling to be resolutely objective. A modern biographer observes that Collins was "singularly reserved in the expression of his personal feelings," and suggests that he lacked any vital passion.⁴⁰ The poet's reserve is unquestionable, but I should ascribe it to a fear of passion rather than to a lack of that quality. Like other men with madness lurking in their minds—Charles Lamb, for example—he shrank from a direct grappling with experience. He writes with ink, not with blood. Almost all of his major poems are *about* the writing of poetry. Pity, fear, simplicity, the superstitions of the Highlands, the passions in general, are treated as the stuff of literature rather than the stuff of life. His imagination dwells among a host of personified abstractions. To these he pays a literary sort of worship, but with one exception to be noted later his devotion to these ideal shadows can hardly be described as religious. The temple which they inhabit is at first glance rather strictly Neo-Hellenic, but on closer inspection one sees that a more Gothic kind of fancy has also been at work. Greek chastity is tinged with medieval strangeness. Aristotelian fear gives place to Wartonian spookery. Sometimes the ode becomes, not a resolved agitation, but an equilibrium striven for and excitingly lost: the reposeful epode is placed in the middle. A good many Druids and "old Runic bards" are about. The shrines of Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton bear richer garlands than those of the Greek tragic dramatists.

Collins's admitted peculiarities, then, by no means completely separate

⁴⁰ E. G. Ainsworth, Jr., *Poor Collins*, p. 78.

him from those literary trends which are usually associated with the cult of feeling. He is a lover of patriotism, of liberty, and of nature. The *Ode to Evening* is a beautiful variant of the contemplative-retirement type. The *Ode on the Popular Superstitions of the Highlands of Scotland* suggests that his imagination, granted a longer period of sane development, would have moved from a sentimental Neo-Hellenism to a sentimental blend of naturalism and medievalism. His closest friends were such men as Thomson, Mallet, Cooper, John Langhorne, and the Wartons. His dread of didacticism and his personal reserve do not always prevent him from showing his intellectual kinship with these men of feeling.

In *The Manners*, for example, he bids farewell to academic learning, the bride of doubt, and turns to an anti-intellectual empiricism.

Youth of the quick uncheated sight,
Thy walks, Observance, more invite!
O thou, who lov'st that ampler range,
Where life's wide prospects round thee change,
And, with her mingled sons ally'd,
Throw'st the prattling page aside
To me in converse sweet impart,
To read in man the native heart,
To learn, where Science sure is found,
From Nature as she lives around
And gazing oft her mirror true,
By turns each shifting image view!
Till meddling Art's officious lore
Reverse the lessons taught before,
Alluring from a safer rule,
To dream in her enchanted school,
Thou, Heaven, whate'er of great we boast,
Hast blest this social science most

One would hardly call the bookish Collins an adept in this science, but it is interesting to see that he believes in it. The passage accords with the primitivism of the *Popular Superstitions* ode, where the natives of St Kilda live "blest in primal innocence" and derive their virtues directly from nature.

But of course the presiding deity in Collins's pantheon of personifications is Genius. The *Ode on the Poetical Character* provides the one exception to the statement that his poetry is always nonreligious. The girdle typifying poetic genius is both rare and holy.

Young Fancy thus, to me divinest name,
To whom, prepar'd and bath'd in Heaven,
The cest of amplest power is giv'n,

To few the god-like gift assigns,
 To gird their blest prophetic loins,
 And gaze her visions wild, and feel unmix'd her flame

Poetry is the offspring of God and of Fancy, but since God's chief attribute is creative imagination the two parents are not very sharply distinguished

The band, as fairy legends say,
 Was wove on that creating day,
 When he, who call'd with thought to birth
 Yon tented sky, this laughing Earth,

Long by the lov'd enthusiast woo'd,
 Himself in some diviner mood,
 Retiring, sate with her alone,
 The whiles, the vaulted shrine around,
 Seraphic wires were heard to sound,
 Now sublimest triumph swelling,
 Now on love and mercy dwelling,
 And she, from out the veiling cloud,
 Breath'd her magic notes aloud
 And thou, thou rich-hair'd youth of morn,
 And all thy subject life was born

Poets, then, are in a peculiar sense "the sons of soul" Their genius is the faculty that brought the world into being

Mr Woodhouse has pointed out the similarity between these views and the Platonic trend in Renaissance critical theory⁴ Since Collins was well versed in Renaissance thought, the comparison is pertinent In seventeenth-century England, however, such theories were cultivated chiefly by humanistic Puritans like Milton, Collins's ideal poet, they were carried into the eighteenth century by Dennis, Watts, and Blackmore, they were further developed by Aaron Hill and Edward Young and related to the philosophy of Shaftesbury by Isaac Hawkins Browne, Henry Brooke, and Mark Aken-side The concept of creative imagination would satisfy Collins's aestheticism without offending his Protestantism Thus in the *Ode on the Poetical Character* we touch for once the spiritual core of Collins's work, and find that his poetic faith represents a familiar aspect of the religion of sentiment

It is natural to couple Collins with Thomas Gray (1716-1771) Both were shy, fastidious, mistrustful men who avoided self-revelation in their poetry

⁴ A. S. P. Woodhouse, "Collins and the Creative Imagination," *Studies in English by Members of University College, Toronto* (1931), pp. 59-130

and drew their inspiration from literature rather than from life. Both were weary of didacticism. Both found in the ode a classical way of being romantic and a romantic way of being classical. At the close of their careers, both were moving in the direction of medievalism. These similarities, however, must not blind us to the differences. Gray is a more finished craftsman than Collins, but lacks the delicacy, strangeness, and suggestiveness of his fellow-poet. He is cooler, more academic, more robust and extraverted. The relations between his poetry and his character are difficult to trace, for the letters, with rare exceptions, are not those of a sentimentalist. He cultivated poetry as a relief from boredom and spleen, writing with aesthetic pleasure but without deep emotional conviction. He refers to *The Bard* as "Odikle." The author of the *Elegy* can write to Wharton: "As to Humanity you know my aversion to it, which is barbarous and inhuman, but I cannot help it. God forgive me."⁴² Perhaps Walpole was right in insisting that his friend was by nature a wit. There is certainly no poet equally rich in preromantic symptoms who gives less evidence of possessing a basically romantic temperament.

For these reasons Gray is even more baffling to a student of our subject than Collins. Unlike the *Ode on the Poetical Character*, Gray's *Progress of Poesy* contains no religious element whatever. The art is associated with freedom and other lofty abstractions but not with divine creative power. When he calls poetry the "sovereign of the willing soul" he merely means, as his gloss explains, "Power of harmony to calm the turbulent sallies of the soul. The thoughts [of this stanza] are borrowed from the first Pythian of Pindar." On a theme where even Collins is self-revealing, Gray hides behind his eloquence and his erudition.

What did Gray really believe? Even at the cost of some inconsistency of method, the question is worth answering. In a valuable chapter on "Les Idées de Gray,"⁴³ Roger Martin provides a useful summary. Gray's mind, we are told, shrank from large generalizations. For him, Seneca was the most practical of the ancient philosophers, and Locke of the moderns. His theology was a sensible, unenthusiastic Anglicanism slightly spiced with the livelier Cambridge liberalism of Conyers Middleton. Opposed to such rigid orthodoxy as Waterland's, he admired the breadth of Samuel Clarke. Beyond this latitudinarianism he refused to go. He disliked the school of Shaftesbury and Hutcheson and directed against Bolingbroke's posthumous

⁴² *Correspondence*, eds. Toynbee and Whibley, I, 420.

⁴³ Roger Martin, *Essai sur Thomas Gray*, pp. 256-81.

infidelities a prose essay combining the rationalism of Clarke and Wollaston with the "inward witness" pragmatism of the Common Sense school⁴⁴

Martin's summary might have included a stronger emphasis on Gray's underlying scepticism. One adopts such views as a *modus vivendi* when one has lost confidence in rational certitude. Hence Gray's religion, for all its apparent hardheadedness, was one which often assumes a sentimental form when expressed in poetry. We may also, with the help of Gray's letters, show that the more positively Christian aspects of Gray's thought did not take form until after he had composed his most important poems.

In the letters which he wrote as a Cambridge student, he says nothing about religion but is fond of using "Jesus!" as a modish exclamation.⁴⁵ His travels with Walpole produce the famous letter written to West on November 16, 1739, where he is thrilled by the scenery on the way to the Grande Chartreuse: "Not a precipice, not a torrent, not a cliff, but is pregnant with religion and poetry. There are certain scenes that would awe an atheist into belief, without the help of other argument. One need not have a very fantastic imagination to see spirits there at noon-day. You have Death perpetually before your eyes, only so far removed, as to compose the mind without frightening it."⁴⁶ Notice the phrase "religion and poetry"—apparently there is not much difference—and the fact that the mood is one of pleasantly superstitious fear rather than of reverence. A *Salvator Rosa* landscape has come true.

Five days later he and Walpole enjoy a quite different aesthetic experience. In Genoa they have attended the Church of the Madonna delle Vigne, "to put up our little orisons, (I believe I forgot to tell you, that we have been sometime converts to the holy Catholic Church)." West is to laugh at that parenthesis. The service is described wholly as a musical entertainment which included "two eunuch's voices, that were a perfect feast to ears that had heard nothing but French operas for a year."⁴⁷

For some years, Gray had a taste for reading of a markedly sceptical sort. A batch of books which he sends to Mann in July, 1742, includes Boulanvilliers's *Vie de Mahomed*. "It is famous you are desired to make no reflections, nor draw Consequences, when you read it." The book, we may interject, is intended to suggest that all priestcraft is imposture. He sends also an English work with the same purpose, Middleton's *Letter from Rome*,

⁴⁴ It may be found in Tovey's edition of the *Letters*, II, 43-46.

⁴⁵ See for example *Correspondence*, eds. Toynbee and Whibley, I, 3 and 21.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 128. See also the Latin *Alcibiades Ode* inscribed in the visitors' book at the monastery.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 130. A similar occasion is described on p. 180.

showing an Exact Conformity between Popery and Paganism—"worth your reading,"—together with Woolston's *Six Discourses on the Miracles*—"an impudent fellow"⁴⁸ Later Gray mentions "an account of the History of Crusades, which seems to be Voltaire's, and promises well"⁴⁹

The reader may remember the combination of extremely broad Protestantism with extremely liberal Whiggery in Horace Walpole's *Epistle from Florence to Thomas Ashton, Esquire*⁵⁰ In 1748 Gray praises this poem highly, finding that its "shining parts" are "those lines on the royal unction, on the papal dominion, and convents of both sexes, on Henry VIII and Charles II"⁵¹ It is not altogether surprising that in this same year the Master of Peterhouse told "a large Table full of People, that I was a Kind of Atheist" Gray's letter of reproof, which is not extant, has fallen into the hands of Henry Etough, a scandalmongering parson, who is giving it undesirable publicity⁵²

Since the latitudinarianism of Conyers Middleton was so sceptical, negative, and ambiguous as to amount to a kind of crypto-deism, Gray's admiration for him is significant Their relations seem to have been close, for the poet writes Wharton on August 9, 1750 "You have doubtless heard of the Loss I have had in Dr Middleton, whose House was the only easy Place one could find to converse in at Cambridge"⁵³ For the sake of Middleton's reputation, it is said, Dr Heberden burnt a highly unorthodox *Treatise on Prayer* and other manuscripts given him by the widow But this posthumous censorship must have been incomplete, for Gray informs Walpole in September, 1751 "I am going to see three of Dr M's little Works, that *were burnt*"⁵⁴ The amused italics are Gray's

For Gray, the priesthood of his friend Mason was an irresistibly comic theme "Bell Selby," he writes in 1756, "has dream'd that you are a Dean or a Prebendary I write you word of it, because they say a Whore's dreams are lucky, especially with regard to Church-Preferment"⁵⁵

As late as April, 1758, the "only comfort" which Grey can offer Wharton on the death of his little son is the reflection "that others have suffer'd worse, or that we ourselves might have suffer'd the same misfortune at times and

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, p 216

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, p 336 Voltaire's *Histoire des croisades* is a section of the *Essai sur les mœurs*

⁵⁰ See p 17

⁵¹ *Correspondence*, I, 296-97

⁵² *Ibid*, p 302

⁵³ *Ibid*, p 328

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, p 351 See also pp 348 and 350

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, II, 488 For similar levity on Mason's appointment to a royal chaplaincy see II, 522

in circumstances, that would probably have aggravated our sorrow"⁸⁶ His epitaph on Robin is equally devoid of religious solace

Here, freed from pain, secure from misery, lies
A child, the darling of his parents' eyes

Few were the days allotted to his breath,
Now let him sleep in peace his night of death

About this time, however, a change begins to be apparent In April, 1760, he describes King Frederick's *Le Philosophe Sans Souci* as "all the scum of Voltaire and Lord Bolingbroke, the *Crambe recoccta* of our worst Free-thinkers, toss'd up in German-French rhyme"⁸⁷ Gray is now a man of forty-nine—high time to cultivate sober, solid, edifying ideas Three years later he declares that Rousseau's *Émile* is absurd in its general scheme but full of wise observations "As to his religious discussions, which have alarmed the world I set them all at nought, and wish they had been omitted" In December, 1764, and January, 1765, he is reading Rousseau's *Lettres écrites de la Montagne* and contentedly postponing the reading of Voltaire's *Dictionnaire Philosophique* Of the former he says that Rousseau "justifies himself, till he convinces me, that he deserved to be burnt, at least that his book did It is a weak attempt to separate the miracles from the morality of the Gospel"⁸⁸

In 1766 the death of Nicholls's uncle evokes a response very different from that called forth by the death of Robin Wharton eight years before "He who best knows our nature (for he made us what we are) by such afflictions recalls us from our wandering thoughts and idle merriment, from the insolence of youth and prosperity, to serious reflection, to our duty and to himself"⁸⁹ And Mason, when his wife died in the following year, received the pious prayer "May He, who made us, the Master of our pleasures, and of our pains, preserve and support you!"⁹⁰

In 1770, when Beattie sends him his diatribe against Hume, the *Essay on Truth*, Gray thanks the author and adds "I have always thought David Hume a pernicious writer, and believe he has done as much mischief here as he has in his own country A professed sceptic can be guided by nothing but his present passions (if he has any) and interests" In this sense, he continues, any child may be called a philosopher⁹¹

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, pp 569-70

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, pp 856 and 859

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p 953

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p 670

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, III, 935.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p 1141

When at last he reads Voltaire's *Dictionary*, he writes to Walpole on March 17, 1771 "Atheism is a vile dish, tho' all the cooks of France combine to make new sauces to it As to the Soul, perhaps they have none on the Continent, but I do think we have such things in England Shakespeare, for example, I do believe had several to his own share As to the Jews (tho' they do not eat pork) I like them because they are better Christians than Voltaire"⁶⁸

Apparently, then, Gray did not reach the affirmatively latitudinarian position described by M. Martin before 1759 or 1760 All of his important poems, with the exception of his Norse and Celtic paraphrases, were written against a background of witty contempt for institutional religion and of sceptical indifference to spiritual concerns Like Horace Walpole, whose religious views were precisely like his own, he found emotional release in cultivating preromantic literary tendencies, but he was never a warm devotee of the religion of sentiment When "the insolence of youth" left him, he simply discovered that Beattie was more sensible, safe, and soothing than Middleton

A few notes on the poems may serve as a reminder of their spiritual barrenness The threads of Welsh or Icelandic mythology woven into *The Bard*, *The Descent of Odin*, and *The Fatal Sisters* are of interest only because they illustrate, like the analogous material in the Ossianic poems, the increasing appeal of exotic beliefs to men whose feelings were starved by the dullness of their own religion The *Ode for Music* is studiously secular except for a passage which echoes the Cambridge liberalism of Middleton and Walpole by praising, a trifle superciliously, Henry VI and Henry VIII

The murder'd saint, and the majestic lord,
That broke the bonds of Rome,
(Their tears, their little triumphs o'er,
Their human passions now no more,
Save Charity, that glows beyond the tomb)

The faint gleam of "social" feeling in the last line appears more clearly in *Hymn to Adversity*, where Stoicism softens into benevolism

Thy form benign, oh, goddess, wear,
Thy milder influence impart,
Thy philosophic train be there
To soften, not to wound, my heart
The generous spark extinct revive,

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 1175

Teach me to love and to forgive,
 Exact my own defects to scan,
 What others are, to feel, and know myself a man

This is perhaps a genuine prayer for emotions in which Gray knows himself to be deficient

That masterpiece of pensive melancholy, the *Elegy*, was described by John Keble as "about the only specimen of the indirect, and perhaps the most effective species of sacred poetry, produced in that age, which has obtained any celebrity"⁶³ As sacred poetry it is very indirect indeed, but one sees what Keble means The scene itself, the "solemn stillness," the tender sombreness of thought and phrase, all help to build up a quasi-religious atmosphere which prevents the artificially pious conclusion from seeming incongruous

It may at least be said that in the *Elegy* and in the fragmentary *Ode on the Pleasures Arising from Vicissitude* one observes something of that genuine excitement in the presence of nature which appears in a few of the early letters as well as in the journal of the Lake Country tour But the religious potentialities of this nature feeling never come to fruition in his work Even when he turns from Middleton to Beattie his emotions are sundered from his opinions His romantic curiosities are then expressed, not through external nature, but through Teutonic or Celtic legends which, though rich in thrilling superstition, are devoid of spiritual significance The chief conclusion to be drawn from Gray's writings is that once sentimentalism has taken definite form its literary media may be cultivated by a conscious artist who has no religion worth mentioning, sentimental or otherwise

Even these relatively nondidactic poets, as we see, may be associated with the dominant trend of our subject The Wartons are clergymen and Tories, the remaining four are laymen and Whigs Shenstone's father was a yeoman farmer, the Warton's, a parson, Chatterton's, a writing master, choirman, and performer of miscellaneous chores, Collins's, a hatter, Gray's, a scrivener On the whole, then, the backgrounds of these writers are what our knowledge of other sentimental poets would lead us to expect The group is too small to justify attaching much importance to the fact that only Chatterton begins his career after 1760⁶⁴ But although it is probably true that the sentimental view of life must attain a fairly definite formulation before it

⁶³ Quoted in Abbey and Overton, *The English Church in the Eighteenth Century*, II, 296

⁶⁴ Thomas Warton is active almost to 1790, the year of his death, but his first verses were published in 1745

can be fully exploited⁶⁵ in nonrhetorical poetry, we cannot lay down the principle that aesthetic sentimentalism is consistently "later" than didactic sentimentalism

The intrinsic merit of at least three of these poets, combined with the modern critical preference for "pure" poetry, has led some students to regard this eddy of nondidactic writing as preromanticism par excellence. In so doing they deprive themselves of the opportunity to study the spiritual and intellectual sources of the Romantic Movement in their clearest form. If Keats is the heir of Chatterton, Wordsworth is no less plainly the heir of Akenside. And the aestheticism of Keats, whose distaste for the didactic is not unlike Joseph Warton's, is greatly indebted to those speculations on genius, imagination, and beauty-truth which the prosiness of most eighteenth-century poetry has enabled us to understand. From a purely critical standpoint, Chatterton, Collins, and Gray are of obvious importance, but the main historical highway of eighteenth-century poetry runs through the more overtly sentimental poets examined in earlier chapters.

⁶⁵ "Fully" should be emphasized. We saw in Vol. I that sporadic external symptoms appear earlier than theoretical generalizations.

Chapter XI

LOOKING BEFORE AND AFTER

THIS LENGTHY BOOK MUST NOT BE WRITTEN OVER AGAIN BY WAY OF PERORATION. But since my next volume will require six or seven years of work, and since no one can tell what may happen to the world and to me during that time, I feel justified in looking back over my two eighteenth-century studies, though with special attention to this volume, and even in looking forward a little into the future of my theme.

In my own prejudiced opinion Volume I, *Protestantism and the Cult of Sentiment*, told a fairly clear and coherent story. For the benefit of new readers, its chief conclusion was restated in the opening chapter of the present book: the sentimental religion which is faintly discernible in the Queen Anne period, and which begins to rise markedly about 1720, develops from the Low Church Anglicanism and Nonconformity of the seventeenth century. In some individual cases Protestantism sloughs down into sentimentalism directly, but more usually the process moves through one or more stages of latitudinarianism. The present study of *Religious Sentimentalism in the Age of Johnson* has corroborated this thesis by a large mass of specific evidence.

The Protestant background of the religion of sentiment is no less obvious in the later than in the earlier period. The striking development of pre-romantic medievalism during the Age of Johnson may seem to introduce a discordant factor. This tendency, however, implies no more than a desire for emotional stimulation by the strange and the remote. If contact with the Middle Ages had inspired in Gothicists like Thomas Warton the most lukewarm affection for Holy Church, the Incarnation, the Virgin Mary, the priesthood, or the sacrament of the altar, one would grant that a Catholic influence was at work upon them. Most of these amateurs of ruined abbeys, however, take pains to show their disapproval of popish superstition. Even when they are less unsympathetic they interpret monasticism in terms of

them together in something like a system, and gave them new significance as channels of a religious, philosophical, and aesthetic movement¹

We have found no reason to dispute the familiar notion that sentimentalism is more abundant in the Age of Johnson than in the Age of Pope. In the first part of Volume I, covering the years 1700–1720, the yield was so meagre that we were forced to make much of what we found in order to persuade ourselves that we had found anything. By 1760, on the contrary, the cult of sentiment is all-pervasive. There is hardly a poet who does not display some sentimental symptoms, complete sentimentalists are much more numerous, and the roster of sensibility includes a larger number of influential and deservedly well-known writers. The religion of feeling, with its appropriate vehicles of literary expression, becomes dominant in English poetry of the Age of Johnson.

Sentimentalism, however, is not a commodity that can be weighed and measured. Even were it less imponderable, only complete induction could determine the rapidity and extent of its growth, and our evidence does not approach such exhaustiveness. Comparing the rather abundant materials of the two volumes, however, I feel justified in saying that the *rate* of development is greater between 1720 and 1740 than during the period of the present study. Sentimentalism is somewhat more widespread in 1760 than in 1740, but the change is not very striking. I doubt if there is any marked quantitative gain between 1760 and 1780.

Turning from quantitative to qualitative changes, one might expect that the poets of Volume II would deepen, enrich, and further systematize the stock of sentimental ideas bequeathed to them by the Age of Pope. That expectation is frustrated. By 1740, the poetry of sentimentalism has said all that it will find to say in the next forty years. The later period, compared to the earlier, displays a trend from outwardness to inwardness, from concepts to moods, from rationalism to hard empiricism to soft empiricism. The rationality of nature, for example, is becoming less important than the benevolent or creative feelings of the mind that contemplates its harmonious beauties. This change, however, could have been prophesied by any reader of Volume I. The 1740–1780 period reveals a continued shift of emphasis, but it produces no fundamental novelties. The familiar thoughts and themes are repeated again and again, often in almost the same words. Even Aken-side, despite his power of utterance, adds little or nothing to the basic theories of Isaac Hawkins Browne and Henry Brooke.

¹ See Vol. I, Chap. V, "The Beginnings of Sentimentalism," especially pp. 205–20.

Although sentimentalism flourishes in the Age of Johnson, it does not firmly move from one point to another. It is like a wide, sluggish stretch in a river—brimful of tepid water and teeming with vegetation, but not advancing rapidly and powerfully toward the sea. The material of Volume I was divided into two twenty-year segments, which on being compared revealed a considerable amount of movement within the whole period. For Volume II no such segmentation seemed practicable² there is not enough significant change. A comparison of the years 1740-1760 with the years 1760-1780 would show a marked development of medievalism—a sign that the man of feeling is increasingly content with something to make him feel. It would further suggest that the 1740-1760 division is somewhat richer in sentimental *ideas* than the 1760-1780 division. The fact that a larger number of important poets would also be assigned to the former indicates that the Age of Johnson, intellectually sluggish as a whole, becomes if anything more sluggish toward its close. Its general sameness, however, is so marked that it is best to regard it as a unit. This stagnant and ingrowing quality is probably to be accounted for by the breakdown of rationalism which was described in the first chapter of this book. It is a time for poetry of hand-to-mouth empirical assumptions and of uncritical feeling but hardly for poetry which sheds fresh imaginative light upon intellectual problems.

To say this is perhaps also to say that, even outside of the small circle discussed in the preceding chapter, poetry has become less reflective and more lyrical, and that all true lovers of the art should hail the change with joy. The lyricism of the Age of Johnson, however, suggests intellectual weakness more often than emotional strength. With rare exceptions, poets have not yet regained the secret of poetic thinking. When they grow weary of argument and system-building they generally twitter tender little platitudes or hunt for superficial thrills. The poetry of the period gives an impression of feebleness and uncertainty. It is feeding upon its own soft notions rather than upon the actual stuff of life. The cult of sentiment, of course, was reflected in various humanitarian reforms, but such contacts with reality were not vital enough to be inspiring. There were innumerable words, but since they had not been made flesh they were neither deeply religious nor deeply poetic. The age awaited the intense spiritual conviction which is aroused in men's hearts only by the impact of a great historical event. The dynamite of the French Revolution had not yet turned the sluggish stream into the romantic torrent.

The foregoing metaphor may be misleading in its connotations of cata-

² Corresponding divisions were employed in Chap. VII, but merely as a device of arrangement.

strophic suddenness From the accession of George III, and especially after the American Revolution, forces prophetic of the great explosion across the Channel were astir in England At the point where we conclude this study, however, the peculiar blend of rationalism, empiricism, and sentimentalism which constitutes the Jacobin mentality has not yet found clear expression in English poetry Echoes of the French *philosophes* in Kenrick, Keate, and a few other poets are faint Allusions to Rousseau are still surprisingly rare, and in the absence of specific references it is almost impossible to distinguish his sentimentalism, when expressed in English poetry, from the native English tradition on which he himself drew so abundantly

The relations between Christianity and sentimentalism between 1740 and 1780 are confused and ambiguous On closing Volume I the reader would be inclined to predict that later poets would increasingly turn from the traditional faith to a more or less frankly deistic cult of sentiment But although a good many poets of the Age of Johnson validate this prediction the trend is obscured, and sometimes even reversed, by countercurrents There is a decline of overt, dogmatic, organized deism, an increase of a loosely benevolistic kind of feeling which is apparently regarded as Christian The decay of rationalism again offers an explanation, but I need not repeat what I have already written on that topic

The subsidence of deism, however, by no means implies that the Christian faith has strengthened its grip on poetic imagination If an amorphous religiosity has diffused itself over almost the whole area of serious poetry in the Age of Johnson, sacred poetry proper has greatly diminished The verse of the "Unenthusiastic Christians" is dull, cold, and mechanical Pure Methodism is almost completely sub-literary Evangelicalism has its hymns, but seldom appears in nonliturgical poetry except in a form so diluted that it can hardly be distinguished from latitudinarianism Edward Young, born in 1683, and John Byrom, born in 1692, might equally well have been discussed in Volume I, for their minds were shaped by the Age of Pope and much of their work was produced during that period Smart and Cowper, definitely of the Age of Johnson, are very unusual And although these four important religious poets of Chapter VI are certainly Christians, they exemplify in varying degree the sentimental implications of Protestantism There are also, as we have seen, a great many "Sentimental Christians" or "Christian Sentimentalists" who interpret the humanitarian aspects of Christianity in the light of the cult of feeling

The situation is prophetic of the modern cleavage between the artist and the man in the street In the 1740-1780 period the middle class is beginning

to produce its own intellectual aristocracy, and the spirit of that aristocracy is more sentimental than Christian. Large numbers of people, to be sure, are retaining or reviving that stricter Protestantism of which sentimentalism is the offspring, but they are not the sort of people who write poetry that is fit to read. With rare exceptions, "literary" folk will continue to sing of universal harmony and the social glow. Henceforth, on the whole, the Gospels will be for the believing lowbrow, the religion of sentiment for the believing highbrow. But the division is not clean-cut, for in the Age of Johnson, especially among the latter class, both systematic Christianity and systematic deism have become so blurred that there is no longer any clear distinction between the remnants of the Christian faith and the cult of feeling. If to be a Christian is simply to enjoy the luxury of doing good within the universal harmony, nothing prevents the sentimental deist from calling himself a Christian. For many softly empirical writers, pure deism is too dry and rationalistic, too closely associated with witty negations, too lacking in power to reform the age and keep the poor suitably grateful for their blessings. Even of those poets who seem to express a completely non-Christian sentimentalism, very few would declare, "I am not a Christian, but a deist." Such a confession of faith would be meaningless, for since Christianity outside of Evangelical circles now signifies anything or nothing, it is hardly possible to be an infidel. The existence of heresy demands the existence of orthodoxy. In short the failure of sentimentalism to detach itself completely from the traditional faith during the period of this volume is not to be interpreted as a victory of the Cross. It merely indicates that the religion of Christ has reached a stage in which it can no longer be distinguished from the religion of Shaftesbury. The same confusion existed in the Age of Pope, but it has become much more widespread in the Age of Johnson.

Those who feel that the foregoing remarks imply too narrow a conception of the Christian religion must once more be reminded that the historical core of Christianity is the redemption of sinful man through the incarnate life and sacrificial death of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. That it now means something quite different to many people merely bears witness to the truth of the preceding paragraph. But although the basic ideas of Christianity are poles apart from those of sentimentalism,⁸ the two religions are genetically related by the sentimental elements preserved and fostered by Protestantism.

⁸ For a statement of the essential differences between orthodox Christianity and sentimentalism see pp. 279-284.

More orthodox critics may object that the cult of sentiment does not merit the title of "religion" at all. But whatever his personal beliefs may be, the historian of ideas must recognize that sentimentalism is indeed a sort of religion. It includes a body of ideas concerning a Supreme Being and His relations with the physical universe and with man, together with ethical and aesthetic views closely related to those ideas. Many of the external phenomena of sentimentalism, as of Christianity itself, are too superficial to be described as religious, but the movement has a spiritual basis from which it derives its chief importance.

Although the sentimentalism of the Age of Johnson may be disappointing to students who seek in poetry a clearly defined curve of intellectual development, its abundance has enabled us to study it more carefully than was possible in Volume I. So diverse are its manifestations that some readers may accuse me of having employed a single term to cover several distinct entities. Professor Lovejoy's celebrated argument in favor of substituting "romanticisms" for "romanticism"⁴ might be applied to our own subject. By employing a somewhat similar type of analysis it would have been possible to announce the discovery of some thirty-six "sentimentalisms"—Newtonian sentimentalism, primitivistic sentimentalism, transcendental sentimentalism, and so on. I doubt, however, whether any such atomistic scheme would have benefited this study. Poetry is written by men, and men think in large muddled complexes rather than in neat little parcels. The apparent divisions constantly intertwine, when one endeavors to separate them one sees that they are not separate entities, but variant forms of one thing. The only suggestion of a radical cleavage between types of sentimentalism represents the man of feeling's uncertainty as to whether he should seek his ideals within the busy hive of bourgeois civilization or apart from it. But these two ways of leading the life of sentiment are not irreconcilable. The memory of active service to mankind sweetens the pleasures of the grot, while retired contemplation raises the mind to that God whose essence is social love.

No scholar who undertakes to form large historical generalizations, on however ample a basis of objective fact, can hope to avoid the charge of "oversimplification." But as with those pseudo-diseases popularized by advertising agents, one never knows when one has committed the fault. Smith's exquisitely careful inferences will look oversimplified to Jones, and vice versa. Guilty or not, I believe that I have been justified in describing sentimentalism as a single movement with many different manifestations.

⁴ A. O. Lovejoy, "On the Discrimination of Romanticisms," *PMLA*, XXXIX, 229-53.

I have tried to do justice both to its inward unity and its external diversity, though I have quite frankly been more interested in the former

The psychological root of the religion of sentiment, it seems to me, is a form of human pride that may be called "self-love," "self-trust," "self-sufficiency," or "self-expansion." This impulse is often interwoven with a sense of inadequacy which must somehow be stifled or transcended. But although the religion of sentiment, especially in its contemporary Fascist form, often suggests the overcompensated inferiority complex, it would be rash to ground an interpretation of the entire subject on this psychiatric pattern. Pride is natural and basic in man, it is when pride is checked that feelings of inferiority develop. One can go no deeper than self-love itself.

The relations between the sentimental impulse and religion are complex and often paradoxical. Religion, the great enemy of pride, may so easily provide the most efficacious way of being proud. One remembers Southey's Satan, who

owned with a grin
That his favorite sin
Is the pride which apes humility

The lines concern hypocrisy, but they may be applied to a subtler perversion of spiritual values. Self-love, essentially antireligious, requires a faith. The attempts to support it, in the Renaissance and in more recent times, by means of a purely naturalistic humanism have been either abortive or suicidal. In the long run, it takes a religion to kill a religion. A good nature demands a good super-nature, to imagine himself as godlike, man needs a God. Since the Cross denies human self-sufficiency, the sentimentalist living in a Christian civilization must either appeal to a "purer" religion or re-interpret Christianity in sentimental terms. The difference between the two methods, however, is largely one of terminology.

But the attempt to find a religious sanction for the sentimental impulse is older than Christianity. In ancient times, it seizes upon certain aspects of Platonism, Stoicism, and Epicureanism. In the Middle Ages, drawing much encouragement from Neo-Platonic thought, it appears most clearly in the "pre-Protestant" mysticism of the Dispensation of the Holy Spirit. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the sentimental impulse becomes the chief motivating force of Protestantism. Uncurbed by classical or Catholic restraints, it steadily transforms a religion of justification by faith into a religion of justification by self-esteem.

At last, in the eighteenth century, self-love achieves its broadest, most

satisfying rationalization the conception of a universal harmony in which God, man, and nature are pantheistically interfused. In this "closed system of benevolence,"⁵ man shares immanent divinity with nature. Self-love, social love, and divine love are indistinguishable. Nature's God has confirmed man's longing to find goodness, wisdom, and creative power in the depths of his heart. Other aspects of sentimentalism may be regarded as degrees of approach to this theory, as specific applications of it, as exploitations of its privileges, or as uneasy attempts to reconcile it with things as they too obviously are.

The continuity existing between the first two volumes of this series is obvious: they really constitute one book. It will not be difficult, however, to establish a connection between the present study and its unwritten successor. If the eighteenth-century religion of sentiment looks backward to Protestantism, it also looks forward to romanticism. But this fact, which no one familiar with the Age of Wordsworth can fail to recognize, is difficult to express with precisely the right tone and degree of emphasis. When the scholar writes with complete unmetaphorical sobriety, he is derided as a stuffy pedant, when he wistfully tries for a bit of color, he is reproached for sullyng the pure springs of truth. On the latter score I regret having said that Volume I "points to the conclusion that the romanticism of the 1780-1830 period is simply Protestant Christianity in a more or less delightfully phosphorescent state of decay."⁶ I had hoped that the preceding 537 pages would prevent misinterpretation of this too epigrammatic remark, but at least one critic has convinced me that the hope was vain.

The concluding prepositional phrase I do not retract. Reading the poems of Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Shelley, a Christian of Reformation times would certainly feel that in their work Protestantism had melted down almost, though not quite, beyond recognition. Anyone is at liberty to describe this process as the triumphant march of the human spirit toward a brighter day. I must call it what I think it is.

"More or less delightfully phosphorescent" was intended as a whimsical but sincere recognition of the fact that the decay of Protestantism, like the decay of certain physical substances, has been remarkably rich in energy and beauty. My subject, of course, is the history of religious thought in poetry. Whether romantic poetry exhibits aesthetic as well as theological decay is a matter of opinion. I believe that compared with most eighteenth-century

⁵ Pope's phrase in *Essay on Man*.

⁶ I, 538.

poetry it represents an immense aesthetic advance, but that in relation to absolute critical standards it reveals weaknesses which will prove increasingly disastrous in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The superiority of the major romantic poets to their immediate predecessors does not militate against my thesis. By the time that Wordsworth and Coleridge are ready to begin their careers a tradition of sentimental thinking and writing has become solidly established. They have firmer ground to build on than Thomson. They need not grope and compromise and hanker for they know not what. Despite all its aesthetic inadequacies, eighteenth-century poetry has produced a body of ideas and feelings, of themes and patterns, on which creative originality can operate. But something even more important has happened. Temporarily, the French Revolution has made the ideals of sentimentalism come true,

Not in Utopia, subterranean fields,
Or some secreted island, heaven knows where,
But in the very world

It is a kind of parody of the Incarnation. Nature's God has invaded human history. The actual vision soon faded, but the spiritual energies which it released lasted long enough to make great poetry. From a purely aesthetic point of view, the relation of those energies to eternal truth does not matter. A false religion accepted with ardor by a man who can write produces better poetry than a true religion accepted coldly and feebly—until the false religion collapses. When the collapse occurs, even the "purest" critic begins to see a relation between art and belief. In the Romantic Period "this strange disease of modern life" is not cured, but it flares up in a brief feverish power so rich in beautiful utterance that one would call it health if one did not know the later history of the case.

The earlier part of my remark is perhaps more objectionable. The Romantic Movement has many aspects—literary, artistic, psychological, social, economic, political, ethical, metaphysical, religious. It was rash to say that this bewildering complex of phenomena "is"—still worse, "is *simply*"—a phase of Protestant Christianity. Certainly Volume I was too early a point at which to introduce the equation. But by "Protestant Christianity," of course, I meant not merely a cluster of doctrines and modes of worship, but a way of thinking, feeling, and living. My third volume, furthermore, will suggest that romanticism, at its deepest and most intense, is a kind of religious experience, and that while this fact does not destroy the usefulness of

other frames of reference, it makes the religious approach the most fundamental, and in the long run the most inclusive, means of interpretation. Hence while the Romantic Period as a whole comprises much that pertains only indirectly, or not at all, to religion, the *ism* itself may profitably be identified with a stage in the history of religious thought.

But a statement that requires so elaborate an apologia should be amended. Trying now to be impeccably cool, cautious, and exact, I shall substitute the words "The religious ideas and feelings expressed in the most characteristic works of the so-called romantic poets represent a further development of the disintegration of seventeenth-century Protestantism into the eighteenth-century religion of sentiment." This less provocative revision retains some importance for both the history of religious thought and the history of literature. The proposition must be tested further in Volume III, but it may even now be offered as an hypothesis clearly indicated by what we have learned thus far.

Appendix I

PRIMARY SOURCES

THIS IS BY NO MEANS A BIBLIOGRAPHY OF THE POETS NAMED BELOW, BUT SIMPLY a list of the poetic material on which the study is based. Letters and prose writings of certain poets are included when such works have been drawn upon. Only enough of the title has been given to insure identification except when a fuller entry might provide information of some interest. Unless otherwise noted, place of publication is London. When an item published anonymously is unquestionably the work of a particular author, it is entered under that author's name. Anonymous publications of unknown authorship are listed under "Anon." Pseudonymous publications are listed under the pseudonym.

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Appendix II

SECONDARY SOURCES

A LIST OF ALL MATERIALS, OTHER THAN THE WORKS OF EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY POETS, which have been cited in this study. Largely for the benefit of students, I add a number of books and articles which, though not expressly cited, have proved directly or indirectly helpful to me. But titles of the latter sort which were listed in the corresponding Appendix of Volume I have not been repeated here unless their pertinence to the present volume is close.

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